

*Environment in Mind*  
*A Creative and Ecocritical Look at Popular Literature*

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Abstract

Ecocriticism, the “study of literature and the environment” (Glotfelty xvii) is expanding to meet the needs of an ever changing environment, currently shifting to include a broader range of critical methodologies, genres and styles. As such an exploration of the ways in which differential knowledge produced by various methods of presentation of similar information influences the quality and effectiveness of ecocritical discourse and the development of ethical behaviour is an important endeavour when considering ecocritical perspectives on environmental education. In particular the incorporation of the ideals of narrative criticism and the flexibility of representation and subject matter of creative writing is an opportunity to present ecocritical practice to a wider range of individuals. By treating two pieces of “popular literature” in two different styles, academic and creative, the following study aims to investigate the importance of these differing vantage points in elucidating environmental relationships within and outside of the texts. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll and Three Day Road by Joseph Boyden are the focus of ecocritical study and the inspiration for works of creative fiction in the following study.

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"Begin at the beginning," the King said, very gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop." (Carroll 81)

"I used to imagine that he weaved his stories all summer, his words forming invisible nets that he cast over us on the long winter nights, capturing us and pulling us in closer together so that we collected each other's warmth. And sometimes his stories were all that we had to keep us alive." (Boyden 33)

There is an infinite number of perspectives for looking at the world and almost as many for investigating the ways in which literature acts, is acted upon, and exists within the world. As my title suggests, reading and writing with the environment in mind is one such approach. Engaging in critical discussion from an environmental perspective necessitates a familiarity with the history and current directions of ecocriticism, a quickly evolving genre. It also requires knowledge of literary criticism in general, and the willingness to incorporate a broad range of themes into a discussion of literature from an environmental vantage point. For me, both literary criticism in general and ecocriticism in particular could use a dash more creative writing in their methodology and practice. The incorporation of creative modes of criticism into the sphere of ecocritical discussion is what this project ultimately aims to accomplish.

The term ecocriticism was coined in 1973 by William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." In his discussion of literature's contribution to the creative energy flow of the earth and the importance of poetry for activism, Rueckert hit upon terminology that rang true for an increasing number of academics concerned with the connection between literature and the environment. Thus, a group of people who had previously been engaging in

critical discussions about environmental issues and looking at texts for their environmental impact and significance finally had a name by which to call their practice. This is a critical discipline very much in its youth still working out its place in the academic community, and its (much contested) identity. Currently an expanding genre, it promotes opportunities for critics from other schools and disciplines to enter and participate in its discussions, opening up rich opportunities for interdisciplinarity. It is in this tradition that the following project proceeds, albeit with some revisions and additions. Here, I will be exploring literature that I have encountered in everyday life, rather than literature with explicit environmental or activist themes. I will be applying ecocritical techniques to this investigation of what I like to call “popular literature.” Dissatisfied to some extent with the standard modes of ecocritical engagement (the focus on nature writing, nonfiction, and the “country” in a predominantly academic style), I have worked to develop my own understanding of what the preceding term suggests, the result of which fills the following pages and informs the subsequent chapters of this study.

Specifically, in addition to critical engagement with the chosen texts in an academic style, I have also explored those texts in a method informed by the “narrative criticism” tradition that has been circulating (informally) in the ecocritical community since the mid eighties, but has gained significant strength in the past decade (Buell Future 9). Narrative scholarship or narrative criticism, as it is commonly understood, aims to weave together storytelling and literary criticism, highlighting personal experience and reflection in critical writing about nature, focusing primarily on nature writing and especially upon writing that represents nature in a literal way (Slovic “Storytelling”). Scott Slovic asserts: “We must not reduce our scholarship to an arid, hyper-intellectual game, devoid of smells and tastes, devoid of actual experience. Encounter the world and literature together, then report about the conjunctions, the intersecting patterns. Analyze and explain literature through storytelling--or tell your own stories and then, subsequently, show how contact

with the world shapes your responses to texts" (Slovic "Storytelling"). For me, narrative criticism has potential to be much more inclusive and comprehensive than it is in this current incarnation: it can incorporate a much broader range of writing into its critical practice, pushing the boundary of what is considered "valuable" writing for ecocritics to read and to write themselves. In particular, narrative criticism's narrowness of expression limits its accessibility for those outside of the ecocritical community. It excludes environmentalists writing in ways other than realist personal narrative from participating in its discussions, and values one type of understanding above all others – an understanding informed by ecology, a eurowestern science. While wearing the "narrative criticism" hat I adopted while researching for and completing this project, I also stepped quite comfortably into the shoes of a creative writer. In doing so, I have paired the typical theoretical style of ecocriticism with a style that, while still very much theoretical, ventures into much more personal and creative spaces. In short, I had a little writing fun.

### *In the beginning*

So, to begin, let's get some of those pesky definitions out of the way. First and foremost, the ever debated ecocriticism. Ecocriticism, as defined by Cheryl Glotfelty in her 1996 introduction to the *Ecocriticism Reader*, is: "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii). That seems simple enough: elegant yet open ended, this definition leaves a lot of leeway for my own interpretation. In fact, one of the most useful and promising characteristics of ecocriticism is its potential for inclusiveness. As stated above, it is this openness in defining the genre itself that allows such rich and abundant proliferation of methods, collaborations, and critical perspectives in ecocritical circles. However, I would like to spin Glotfelty's definition a little differently. For the purposes of this study, I would like to define ecocriticism as the *interaction* between literature and the environment. I believe that the word

interaction implies an active relationship, one that goes both ways; I will thus be looking at how literature is related to the environment, and vice versa.

This brings me to the second definition: environment. This term proves a little more problematic, for as David Mazel points out, the dictionary definition falls short of being comprehensive, and it may be impossible to arrive at such a state without a complete reimagining of how the self is implicated in the very meaning of “the environment” (Mazel “Orientalism” 138). Notwithstanding these inevitable limitations, “environment” is defined (for the purpose of this study at least) as that which surrounds a given being (human, nonhuman, whatever). There is no far reaching all encompassing space defined as *the* environment, but rather a series of specific environments, with their particularities of geography, society, politics, and nature.

Thus we come to the third definition on our list, and “nature” is the trickiest by far. Raymond Williams sums up the continued difficulty we find in trying to define nature: it is “perhaps the most complex word in (our) language” (qtd. in Bennett 298). Completely ignoring that caution, (yet quite mindful of the implications), let me resort to something relatively uncomplicated and commonsensical, like “that which is not made of concrete.” If it’s not built by human hands, then it’s nature. Rocks, trees, birds, bees, etc. But “nature” is not the same as “natural”. Bound up in the word “natural” is an exceedingly complex array of issues: the negative discourses of sexism and racism, essentialism, and classism to cite a very few.<sup>1</sup> The word “natural” is so often misused and misappropriated that I will try to stay off that road all together.

With the “Big Three” definitions out of the way let’s take the King of Hearts’ advice and “begin at the beginning.” The beginning (as far as I can tell is relevant to this study), is the story of how I made the leap from studying primate crania in my HonBSc degree to literary criticism in my MES. Throughout my entire academic career, I have found myself torn between the two worlds of academia, the sciences and the arts. In my science classes I would write little stories into my

papers; in my art classes I would take X-rays and paint over them. One world without the other seemed flat. Thus, for my undergraduate degree, Anthropology was the best fit, with life drawing classes and pottery on the side. When I entered the Faculty of Environmental Studies I found the same thing happening again; I was supplementing my theoretical courses with creative writing and art, choosing whimsical texts as paper topics, binding my journals with pretty paper, and sketching botanically correct drawings into my work whenever I could.

And so, when I began looking seriously at literary criticism, specifically ecocriticism, as a platform for environmental education, it was a very logical step for me to begin dabbling in creative writing. And dabble I did. While I was dabbling I found that my creative writing was often as insightful as my academic style of writing -- if not more so -- and mostly more fun. Writing creatively forced me to spend time with the concepts I had been researching as I thought about how to best develop the environments in which my stories would unfold. This opened up a world of possibility for my characters and their interactions with those environments, and helped me to think about my own environmental relationships. One of my major challenges as a student and as a writer is patience with the research material I have accumulated. Creative engagement with that material provided me a means of expressing what I had learned, what I disagreed with, and what I thought it meant to live ethically and positively within the environment, in a way I could not within the page limits and form requirements of academic writing. It also gave me an avenue for thinking about the environment as a character itself, rather than simply a space in which events take place. Thinking about the environment in this way helped me to explore the ethical dimensions of environmental issues, and to articulate these concerns within my own writing. I could grapple with the ways in which the environment influenced the lives of my characters, and in doing so began to think about the ways in which the environment influences my own life. It occurred to me, that this type of writing was in and of itself ecocritical. If creative writing could be a means for me to explore the



connection between literature and the environment, then it was entirely plausible to suppose that it might be an interesting critical method in and of itself. Even more interesting perhaps, would be a comparison of these two types of critical engagement: placed side by side I might be able to explore what insights scholarly ecocritical writing illuminated that creative ecocritical writing did not, and vice versa.

In grappling with my place in the ecocritical community, I began to think of how that place might be influenced by my everyday experience. Attending the 2007 ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment) conference brought these questions to the forefront for me, as I felt excluded from many ecocritical conversations because of where and how I live. I am a city kid. Born and raised in the suburbs, I now live in an eighth floor condo on one of the busiest corners of downtown Toronto. The view from my window is a rundown apartment building, the busy street, and a streetcar stop. I bike ten minutes to work, walk two minutes across the street for groceries, take the elevator downstairs for a coffee (and a different place to write) and drive thirty five minutes northwest to visit my mother. I have a little window garden that I am struggling to keep alive.<sup>2</sup> As my daily experience is decidedly urban, so too is my writing. As an ecocritic, the urban space is an interesting one to hike through; the lines between nature and human are blurred in a very different way than they are in the backwoods of Ontario. In the city the question becomes not, how do I fit in Nature, but where is Nature and how does it fit into my (city) life? Nature, in spite of all of the concrete, is part of the city: rather the city is part of nature. It is a different nature than you find in the woods, but it is nature nonetheless.

In the past, the urban has been a space largely ignored by ecocritics. Nature writing, nature poetry, and environmentalist critique fill our pages, but the urban experience has been largely left out (Bennett 296). Bennett and Teague provide a significant departure point for the incorporation of the urban into ecocritical practice in their collection The Nature of Cities:

Ecocriticism and Urban Environments (1999). While the urban remains under-explored in ecocriticism as a whole, this collection helped to bring the urban to the forefront of ecocritical practice; fostering a more inclusive engagement with a broader definition of the environment, and encouraging ecocriticism to open its pages to further include ecofeminist critique, race and class politics, and children's issues. Ecocritical writing situated in the urban experience focuses on the interaction between nature and the city (and the city as a natural space), as well as on the issues that surround engagement with the environment of an urban centre. Thus, as a result of living in the city, my writing deals with urban issues: the struggles of an immigrant family in Little Italy in *Rudy*, my own (fantastical) experience of navigating the streets of Toronto in *Amanda in Weddingland*. As a result of my experience living downtown, I gravitate to, and have selected for this study texts which engage with urban environmental issues. These discussions include issues such as environmental justice and racism (as in Three Day Road), homelessness, urban green spaces, and sustainable growth practices (the Queen of Hearts' roses?) The city has often been the site of "noxious stereotypes," thinking based on racist and homophobic portrayals of the dangers of downtown living (Ross 19). Urban ecocriticism must engage with and expose these issues as an urban environmental ethic necessarily moves beyond the "nature" rhetoric.

Writing which focuses on the privileged experience of removing oneself from civilization and heading out to the country for idyllic hikes through the wilderness is just that: privileged. As the majority of Canadians, and indeed most of the world, live in urban centers or suburban areas, most people experience "nature" inside, rather than apart from, their daily lives. It should follow then, that nature writing includes urban nature writing, and all the subgenres that flow from engagement with the environment within the city. This interaction may be better represented for a writer (and an audience) as a fairytale, a science fiction novel, a graphic novel, or a short story: realist representation of nature does not allow for the same level of creative license that other types of

narrative do. Nature writing demands factual representation of nature; it calls for an unmediated experience between the environment and the author, an experience that does not and cannot exist. "There is no unmediated way of existing in harmony with nature, and there never has been" states Bennett in his discussion of social ecocriticism. While nature writing is important, it should not be the style of writing that is important, it should be the presentation of ideas, values, and ethical questions that makes a piece of writing environmental or even ecocritical.

These considerations necessitate a shift in the valuing of literature for ecocritics. Nature poetry, as commonly understood and revered by ecocritical scholars, is not the only type of writing that can have an environmental ethic or be interesting as an ecocritical subject. There are all types of ecocritical dialogues taking place in the both the country *and* the city: literary criticism, environmental activism, public space dialogues, calls for social reform and increased equity in all sorts of styles, fiction and non, realist or fantastical, you name it. Place, in particular the city, shapes the writing it produces, and vice versa (Iverson and Edwards 9). It is into this environment that I insert my ecocritical voice, and it is with a mix of writing styles that I do so. As a Canadian, an academic, and a Torontonion, I cannot help but focus on the urban in my analysis of and writing about the texts with which I engage. Thus, to me, a rabbit hole becomes an elevator shaft and a homeland the corner of Grace and College Streets.

Please do not misunderstand me when I say that the city is part of nature, and that as ecocritics our attention should turn towards our metropolises: I do not believe the city, particularly downtown Toronto, to be a very environmentally friendly place (although urban residents tend to exhibit higher levels of concern for environmental issues, and have a lower individual ecological footprint than those living in rural areas) (Bennett 305). It most certainly is not, but areas outside of the city do not have a better track record when it comes to minimizing their environmental impact (Ross 15). In addition, the city is the place with which I and the majority of my fellow global citizens

interact with nature and each other daily. It is the site of environmental action and of social change, of astonishing waste and environmental destruction. But it is where many of us, as ecocritics, are reading and writing so should be an integral part of both practices.

It follows then, that I engage with a very place-based method of critical inquiry, remembering that where I chose to live and where I grew up necessarily inform my world view. Places that I have experienced routinely and comfortably appear in my writing, and it is the connection (or lack thereof) with those places that my characters are imagined around. While my stories may take my characters outside of the places where they were born or now live, it is my own connection with place based understanding that helps me to shape theirs. As Ivison and Edwards explain “[s]pace, then, at least for those of us living in the early-twenty-first century Canada, is not simply a natural environment against which we struggle or onto which we impose ourselves, but is rather something that we play and active role in producing and shaping” (5). I have necessarily introduced two elegant concepts in this discussion: *space* and *place*. Buell provides a useful discussion of these terms: “Place entails spatial location, entails a spatial container of some sort. But space as against place connotes geometrical or topographical abstraction, whereas place is ‘space to which meaning has been ascribed’” (The Future 63). So then, it is place to which I, as an individual, am intimately connected; it is a regional space (space being the more abstract “classroom” or “institution”). Place, is where I work, play, write, and think. It is the space that I have an opportunity to act upon, and which acts upon me.

### ***Ecocriticism, ethics, and narrative***

The above discussion then, brings me to the importance of literature, both for this study and in the larger context of ecocritical inquiry. Martha Nussbaum discusses throughout her book Poetic Justice the importance of fiction on the development of personal ethics. Nussbaum argues that

literature, specifically the realist novel, provides individuals with ethical guidance that cannot be found in theoretical writing. By developing characters to which readers can relate, and placing those characters in situations of varying degrees of moral quandary, novels allow their reader the opportunity to imagine what it might be like to live a life different from her own. This imaginative act in turn assists readers in the development of ethical behaviour, which Nussbaum understands as the ability to take the place of the other when making ethical decisions.

Nussbaum specifically investigates the relationship of the novel to the development of ethics in a society dominated by market economy and economic theory. The importance of literature to the development of ethics in economics should also be true of the engagement of the environment in literature. By presenting environments outside the realm of everyday experience, treating and writing about these environments in different ways, or by raising novel environmental issues, literature provides readers with an experience that cannot be had by engaging with the theoretical or scientific scholarship. It is this process of identification with literature that facilitates heightened engagement with the reader, providing an opportunity for critical engagement and transfer of knowledge, offering a wider range of tools with which to think about and employ morality and ethics with respect to the environment. Without the inclusion of realist fiction in an individual's education, the development of ethics will be incomplete.

With its focus on realism, Nussbaum's study provides a stepping stone between fiction and nonfiction in considering the importance of literature within the public sphere. Realism is the genre of fiction in which characters, the environment, and the struggles described are most easily identifiable as real life possibilities. As previously discussed, ecocriticism traditionally focuses on nature writing, nonfiction, and narrative criticism; seemingly more comfortable in general with writing that presents readers with a literal representation of the world. However, these types of writing are not unproblematically "nonfiction." They remain a type of mediated experience with the

environment, and are the byproduct of language, culture, and community (Bennett 311). These styles of writing are not meant to inspire imagination, as realist fiction is, but rather to inform the reader about the “real” experience of the author. It is partly for this reason that Nussbaum’s study is so informative for ecocritical theory. Nussbaum’s argument helps to legitimize the focus on fiction as a worthy subject of investigation as a critical subject, through its connection to realism. More importantly perhaps, is Nussbaum’s focus on the development of ethics as a result of reading realist fiction, opening the door for the same consideration of other types of fiction. Ethics are cultivated by the utilization of the human imagination: facts alone don’t cut it. For ecocriticism, an inherently political project, there must be a discussion of ethics with respect to the environment. Exploring the treatment, construction (both the physical process of building and the more abstract construction in its own right), and destruction of the environment through literary modes of representation necessarily requires that the ecocritic consider the ethical intention (or lack thereof) of the reader, writer, individual, corporation, or society that they are reading or writing about. The ecocritic then must also engage in an imaginative consideration of environmental ethics in order to make responsible critiques of the texts with which she engages.

Nussbaum’s assertion can be expanded. My main argument in this project is that creative writing, regardless of form or style, works to challenge the reader to reconsider environmental issues and attitudes in the same way that Nussbaum asserts realist fiction serves as a model for ethical behaviour. By presenting readers with environmental relationships and situations, literature in general offers an opportunity for the reader (and the writer) to reimagine their place in their own environment. Scholars of fairytales, fantasy, and children’s writing have convincingly demonstrated the importance of such writing to the development of identity, conception of place within the world, and problem solving skills in readers (Carpenter 4; O’Keefe 16; Lesnik-Oberstein 216). For example, O’Keefe argues that fantasy can “encourage readers on different levels to think more

freely than usual about questions that connect to their daily experience but penetrate way beyond it and offer new perspectives on it" (16). She further states that "[f]antasy books don't just help readers to develop a self; they help them respond to all that is the non-self" (18). Thus, O'Keefe presents not only a connection to the development of ethics as a result of an engagement with literature, but also a connection to ecocritical inquiry. Reading helps individuals respond to their environment. Offering positive models for change, or an illustration of the consequences of a series of choices, literature urges readers to reconsider their own environmental relationships and impact through an interaction on the page with a fictional reality.

So of course, this is where a more in-depth look at ecocritical methodology comes onto the scene. As previously mentioned ecocriticism has tended to prefer nature writing and poetry as its main subjects of study (Buell Imagination 31). These types of writing tend to be belletristic, and ecocritical scholarship often follows suit unnecessarily. Dana Phillips, in his 2003 book The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America takes issue with ecocriticism's focus on these types of texts, as well as with its tendency to borrow and misuse scientific terms from the field of ecology. Phillips asserts that ecocriticism is often a haphazard and ineffectual marriage of literary criticism and misunderstood or misrepresented ecological and scientific terms (172). Buell, in revisiting his prior commitment to a focus on realist representation in ecocriticism, explores the realm of "social ecocriticism" presented by Bennett (Buell, The Future 22; Bennett 298). Advocating a move towards a more inclusive employment of ecocritical technique, Buell asserts that "the concentration on 'environment' as 'nature' and on nature writing as the most representative environmental genre were too restrictive, and that a mature environmental aesthetics – or ethics, or politics – must take into account the interpenetration of metropolis and outback, of anthropocentric as well as biocentric concerns" (The Future 22-23). So we see in the ecocritical community an opening up of sorts: the movement onto a branch of literary studies that takes as its subject not

only the environment as “nature” but also the environment as the majority of people in Western societies experience it. This is an environment that is sometimes a space of solitary reflection in amongst the trees, but most of the time remains the space of our daily lives.

Buell also highlights a movement within ecocritical studies towards a more inclusive way of imagining the field itself. Theoretical scholarship dominates writing of and about ecocriticism, but more often creative and personal types of writing are making their way into this discourse. These types of writing are embedded with critical reflection, but do not conform to the standard approach to theoretical discussion (Buell The Future 8). Scott Slovic and John Elder are examples of ecocritics engaging in this narrative scholarship. Utilizing storytelling and personal narrative to engage in critical discussion, these writers/scholars are presenting ecocritical issues in ways which promote perhaps a higher degree of self reflection than theoretical analysis (Buell The Future 9). But it is out of reverence for American pastoral nature literature that narrative scholarship was born, and this in and of itself is highly problematic (Phillips 153). Elder’s first book Imagining the Earth; Poetry and the Vision of Nature(1985), cited by Slovic as a major text in the formation of narrative criticism, focuses only on nature poetry; a tradition which views “nature in relatively fixed terms” and takes place largely in secluded areas by privileged individuals (Slovic “Storytelling”; Phillips 153-4). With its vaguely transcendentalist tone (oddly enough a quick internet search for “narrative criticism” yields far more bible study pages then ecocritical projects), narrative criticism sometimes takes itself very seriously, missing the opportunity for humor or self parody often in its pages. In a recent workshop run by John Elder at the 2007 ASLE conference, I found myself in a group of aspiring narrative scholars, and awash in sentimental poetry about a dead gar.<sup>3</sup> While quite helpful in aligning my ecocritical understanding with the aims and methodology of narrative scholarship, I was left with the sense that something was missing. Once away from the workshop, and after retelling my experiences over drinks later the same evening, it occurred to me that what



was missing from my encounter with narrative scholarship was the opportunity for whimsy. So focused were we on the dead gar, and what it might represent as ecocritics, that we could not escape the realm of realism in our poetry. There was no humor, no fantasy, no drama, no fiction: we described our experience as best, and as realistically as we could. We were limited by our method in our attempt to engage with the environment. It is this penchant for autobiographical walks through nature that I believe to be one of narrative scholarship's shortcomings, and it is here that my version of this method differs. However, narrative scholarship's utilization of personal narrative to explore environmental issues and arrive at a place of increased self reflexivity is what I do believe is particularly interesting about the method. Narrative scholarship resists "the abstractifications of theoretical analysis" and the "standard modes of formal argument altogether in favor of a discourse where critical reflection is embedded within narratives of encounter with nature" (Buell The Future 8-9). It is this sort of encounter and critical method that I hope to reproduce in my own ecocritical writing. By utilizing a more open-ended understanding of personal narrative, I have used creative writing (specifically fantasy and historical fiction) to imagine and criticize my own place within my environment. Writers such as Jamaica Kincaid and bell hooks can also fit into narrative scholarship of this sort, with their focus on personal history, environmental racism and justice, and their incorporation of storytelling techniques. Ursula K. Le Guin provides an excellent example of how imaginative narration can enhance an argument or theory as she supplements her theoretical writing with humor and little snippets of fiction (151). So, it is in the spirit of narrative scholarship (but with a little more leeway) that I follow as a student dabbling in ecocritical theory.

The practice of ecocritical reading is like learning to ride a bike: the more I read and write, the sooner I'll be able to shed those cumbersome training wheels and form meaningful opinions and theories of my own. It follows then, that I should engage in an ecocritical discussion of literary

texts informed by the forgoing exploration of current ecocritical methodology. What is different about my approach is not the focus on the urban or the utilization of narrative scholarship, but the employment of these vantage points together. Further, it is the focus on fiction and creative writing rather than on nonfiction or autobiographical writing (as is typical of narrative scholarship), in the utilization of these vantage points. This is not the narrative scholarship of John Elder or Gary Nabhan, while I value their work immensely and gain significant energy from their writing. It is also not the writing of Jamaica Kincaid; although there is experience and political criticism contained within. My work is decidedly fiction, and intentionally playful.

Well, half of my work, at least. The other part is classically ecocritical, or environmental criticism as Buell might term it, with in depth readings and theoretical discussions, long citations and references to other academics' work. I believe that academic scholarship, literary criticism with the environment in mind, is indispensable as a tool for exploring the relationship between literature and the environment. It is in conversation with the work of other scholars, and in close study of texts, that theory and critical ecological literacy evolve. It is also this type of writing which encourages extensive research and engagement of ecocritical history and current analytical direction. My academic writing demanded a depth of engagement with the existing ecocritical literature that my creative writing did not. It pushed me down paths of research and into critical writing that I would not have otherwise explored. When compared to my creative writing it is evident that my academic writing helped to provide me with the knowledge necessary for a critical departure into a fictional space. Once again, one mode of understanding and representation without the other would be flat.

Contained in the pages that follow then, is a literary experiment of sorts: a juxtaposition of scholarly and creative writing, each piece written through an ecocritical lens, and with the environment in mind. Chapters 1 and 3 are ecocritical readings of Lewis Carroll's Alice's

\_\_\_\_\_ and Joseph Boyden's Three Day Road respectively. Placed beside these readings, Chapters 2 and 4 are creative responses to the aforementioned texts. While not as immediately obvious as the scholarly ecocritical readings, these creative works engage in a very personal way both with the representations of the environment in each of the texts studied and with the environment as I experience it daily.

In Chapter 1, *Alice and the Land*, I explore the importance of children's writing to ecocritical practice, as well as the importance of environmental context in reading Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. More specifically I explore the importance of fantasy for the cultivation of environmental understanding and ethics in audiences of children and adults alike. Incorporating these themes, I then embark on a close ecocritical reading of Lewis Carroll's beloved tale, focusing on three major themes in the book: Alice's changing body size and shape, the continual flux of the environment of Wonderland, and animism as it is presented in Carroll's story. As a piece of writing that has been so integrated into popular North American culture, I argue that Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is an important text for understanding of the construction of both the child and of nature and how those constructions fit into our understanding of our own environments.

Chapter 2, *Amanda in Weddingland*, is a fantastical journey through the streets of downtown Toronto and the surrounding suburbs, as the main character attempts to plan her own wedding. Quite obviously based on my own experiences this past summer of a quick engagement and lovely backyard wedding, this chapter explores my own relationships with my very urban environment, and the surreal experience of wedding cakes and tent rentals. Written in the style of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, *Amanda in Weddingland* offered me an opportunity to play with the research I had collected in preparation for the close ecocritical reading presented in Chapter 1. It also offered an opportunity to think about environmental relationships without the constraints of realist writing. It is my "what if?" chapter. What if gravity didn't matter, or cakes changed your size

instantly, or doves wore bow ties? How would these changes to reality affect my relationship to the environment?

Chapter 3, *Wilderness and War*, is an ecocritical reading of Joseph Boyden's first novel Three Day Road. This chapter deals with issues of Canadian identity as presented (or not) in Canadian fiction. Also addressing the fine line between madness and sanity, this chapter explores how Boyden both contrasts and aligns his description of the war torn battlefields of France, and the backwoods of Ontario. The affect of colonial violence on the native Canadian population, specifically the Cree community in Northern Ontario is one of the main focuses of Boyden's novel. As such, Chapter 3 points to the ways in which Three Day Road works to challenge commonly held conceptions of the "Canadian Wilderness," both as a space for colonial (and now capitalist) exploitation and as the "nature" of Canadian national identity.

Chapter 4, *Rudy*, follows the life of Rudy DeCinquentia, the son of an immigrant family living in downtown Toronto. Through the disjointed ramblings of an old man, this story traces Rudy's journey to Murmansk as a seaman for the Royal Canadian Navy. Following Boyden's style, this story is a work of realist fiction that plays with the relationship between past and present, exploring Rudy's difficulty connecting to his environment and identifying with his parents' view of the world. Writing this story afforded me the opportunity to delve into my own family history, exploring the difficulty of my ancestors in adjusting to the environment of Toronto as immigrants from Italy, as well as their participation in WWII. This story sketches my understanding of how environmental relationships may change with old age, and presents the results of failing to cultivate such relationships.

Finally, Chapter 5 borrows its title from the King of Hearts' very poignant statement which opens this project. *Then Stop*, presents the reader with my conclusions for this study. Presented in the chapters themselves will be the very specific nuggets of ecocritical brilliance(!); in the final

chapter you will find my insights as they relate to the overall experience of carrying out such a literary investigation. In particular, I relate the similarities and differences in the engagement with literature in two very different ways: classically ecocritical, and creatively ecocritical. You will find a comprehensive list of my trials and tribulations, triumphs and successes: what worked, and what didn't.

And so, the prior discussion will inform the following chapters like the Cheshire Cat, popping in and out of view unexpectedly, but always potentially present. And as the Cat says: our direction "depends a good deal on where you want to get to." I've thought and written at length about where I think this project ought to end up; now it's time to start walking.

## Chapter 1

### *"Alice and Wonderland"*

#### *An Ecocritical Reading of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

*Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and, burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.*

*In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.*

*The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well.*

*Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her, and to wonder what was going to happen next. (2)*

The above passage, which introduces us and Alice to Lewis Carroll's Wonderland, can be analyzed from an infinite variety of vantage points. An early Transcendentalist might read Alice's fall as a descent into the underworld of hell, a psychoanalyst as the written unconscious remembrance of Carroll's own complicated relationship with his mother, his failure to retain her love and attention, and the resulting disorientation he experienced throughout his adult life. A scientist might question Alice's ability to fit her shoulders through such a small space, and dismiss the passage as outright nonsense. A romantic might read this passage as a metaphorical journey back through the dark hallway of civilization (Orange Marmalade included) towards a childlike understanding of and connectivity to nature that is lost as one grows up and is incorporated into the adult world. In light of the proliferation of psychoanalytical, feminist, literary critiques (as well as the impressive amount of biographical material on Carroll<sup>4</sup>), what then might an ecocritic have to say about Alice's Adventures in Wonderland? Likely, the answer lies in a combination of the above examples, with a dash of Wordsworthian sentiment, and a pinch of environmentalist critique.

Let's pretend then for a moment, that I am an ecocritic. I might say that Alice's trip down the rabbit-hole is not a representation of an actual event, or even a sexual metaphor (Goldschmidt described the fall down the rabbit hole as "perhaps the best-known symbol of coitus" (qtd. in Brooker xvi)), but a literary experiment in fantasy. From an ecocritical perspective, this passage challenges us to move beyond our understanding of our relationship in reality (I certainly cannot fit into a rabbit-hole, and even if I could I would be sure to fall at whatever speed gravity wanted) and imagine what those relationships could be like if the laws of the universe, the ones that we take so very much for granted, were slightly askew. What would it be like if birds scolded us for eating their unborn children, or rabbits owned real estate, or even if Time could be so easily offended as to stay at six o'clock indefinitely? How would we react if nature parodied our everyday life: criticized its laws, pointed out shortcomings in logic and theory, questioned our notion of right and wrong, and made a mockery of "acceptable" behaviour? How would our relationship with the environment be different in such a place? How does this experiment in fantasy and whimsy, rooted very much as it is in reality, inform an understanding of our environment? These questions, I believe, lie at the root of exploring Alice's Adventures in Wonderland from an ecocritical perspective. As a work of children's literature, I will argue, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland helps children to develop their understanding of their own reality, and thus their relationship with nature.

In treating Alice's Adventures in Wonderland ecocritically I hope to explore environmental themes not only as they appeared to Lewis Carroll in 1865, but also as they apply to contemporary Western society. In the following pages then, I will be exploring Alice's Adventures in Wonderland from three different vantage points<sup>5</sup>. While by no means a comprehensive overview, I have made the choice to focus on three specific aspects of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. These points, I believe, can influence thought about the environment for readers, and are an important point of departure for discussion about the environmental issues presented in Alice's Adventures in

Wonderland.<sup>6</sup> Following a short summary of the text, I will begin with a look at Alice's response to her changing body, and explore how the continuing change in her size affects her relation to the environment. I will continue with a discussion of the ways in which Wonderland is in flux, and look at how Alice responds to these changes. Finally I will investigate Carroll's representation of nature in Wonderland, focusing specifically on the animals characters who speak for themselves. In this section I will argue that nature is, in fact treated as a character throughout the story, and will consider the implication of this representation for Carroll's readers.

### *Carroll's own Wonderland*

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was first published in 1865 by Lewis Carroll, the pen name for Charles Dodgson, an English clergyman, mathematician and author (Holbrook 7). Often a friendly companion of young girls<sup>7</sup>, Carroll claimed that he conceived of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland on the sunny afternoon of July 4, 1862, while on a boating excursion with the three daughters of the Liddell family, Lorina, Alice, and Edith, and Robinson Duckworth, a close friend of Carroll's. While an idyllic concept, the story was likely told over a longer period of time, reconceptualized, reworked, and finally written down (Brooker 9). What is interesting to note here from an ecocritical perspective, is the insistence upon the weather being pleasant by Carroll, stated in the story's opening poem: "All in the golden afternoon/ Full leisurely we glide;/ For both our oars, with little skill,/ By little arms are plied..."(Carroll vii). This sentiment is reinforced by Alice Hargreaves (nee Liddell) and Robinson Duckworth, in spite of the meteorological report from July 4, 1862 which states that the weather was "cool and rather wet" (qtd. in Brooker 9). Thus this concern with the weather on that "golden afternoon" reflects a general concern with the environment throughout the book: that the weather should be pleasant for interesting things to unfold, and that fun and adventure happen in the sunshine. In its very conception, Alice's



Adventures in Wonderland sets up a relationship with the environment that is inherently problematic, presenting its audience with an experience of the environment that is laden with pastoral language and claims a false authenticity. The unpleasant aspects of the environment have been removed, not in the text itself, but in the story of its very writing. It is a mediated telling of the experience of the environment that played a role in the imagining a fantastical story.

Industrial Britain was undergoing a shift in thought regarding humanity in general and childhood in particular, at the time of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland's publication in 1865. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had penned the Communist Manifesto seventeen years prior and Darwin's The Origin of Species had been published only six years earlier. It was during this period of intense social change (the American Civil War was raging an ocean away), of reorganization of labour, and of great expansion in scientific thought, that Carroll conceived of and wrote the Alice stories. Concurrently, the entire notion of childhood was under scrutiny by Western thinkers (Aitken 32-33). With the increase in the size of the middle-class and the implementation of child labour laws, childhood began an intense period of "sacralization" (Jenkins 70). No longer could the value of having children be justified by their economic contribution to the family. Rather, in the absence of an instrumental utility, childhood came to be valued in its own right as a period of innocence, connection to nature, or for its ability to sustain and exude nostalgia (Jenkins 76). This revaluing of childhood, with its roots in Rousseau's conception of childhood innocence nearly a century earlier, necessitated a change in writing for children, a change to which Carroll seemed to respond. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland does not carry with it the intense and heavy-handed lessons in morality that the classic fairytales lug along with them, and neither does it subscribe to the proclamation of ethics as did the Christian children's poetry of the same period (which the story parodies). Carroll's story reads as though it were written purely for the entertainment of children. It delivers to its readers, unlike much of the writing of the same time, an alternate view of reality, a view in which

Alice, the lead child character, is strong minded and valued as an individual in her own right, and as girl to boot.

While Carroll was entertaining the Liddell children with his Alice stories, ecocriticism – along with environmentalism – was not yet a thought in the back of its forbearers' minds. The ecocritical tradition, as commonly understood, did not come into being until the late twentieth century (Mazel Ecocriticism 3). However, as Carroll was writing his Alice books, Henry David Thoreau, the forefather of American environmentalism was writing Walden; or life in the woods (1854). Still in the United States, George Perkins Marsh, author of Man and Nature (1864) begins to comment on the degradation of nature, for the first time empirically linked to the expansion of industrial powers (Mazel Ecocriticism 69). In Britain, by 1887, there was a growing awareness of the disconnection between the language used to depict nature and nature itself, by Richard Jefferies (qtd. in Mazel Ecocriticism 70).

I am not suggesting here that Lewis Carroll engaged in conversation with any of these writers or that he took from them inspiration for his works. What I am suggesting is a shift in thought and an increased awareness of environmental issues in that shift, which began to permeate Western thought in general. I am also suggesting that the social and political climate was such that the environment, alongside labour issues and the valuing of children, was becoming a topic of general concern, and interesting conversation. Further, these conditions would have been a part of Lewis Carroll's reality, and are likely for that reason to have been incorporated into his writing and scholarship in some way: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland were, I think, Carroll's response to the massive change going on around him. It is the valuing of the environment in particular with which I am concerned as an ecocritic, keeping in mind that politics, children's issues, human rights as well as environmental degradation (and indeed countless other issues) are all a part of environmental ethics (Buell The Future, ch. 4).

Situated between the worlds of fantasy and reality, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is not quite a fairytale and certainly not realist writing aimed at a child audience. It embodies something very much in between the worlds of childhood and adulthood, between fiction and autobiography. As such, it is difficult to find a beginning place from which to investigate Carroll's writing, for it does not lend itself to easy categorization. There is much literature on realist fiction, on fairy tales, on nonfiction (Nussbaum; Zipes; Buell Imagination), but what to do with literature that does not fit easily into these categories? Carroll's writing then, calls for a marriage of the existing literature on these genres, a mixing of information on children's writing and adult fiction, as well as between fantasy and realism.

There is great value in exploring children's fiction ecocritically, a project that has been largely ignored in the ecocritical community. Wild Things, a collection of writing edited by Sidney I. Dobrin and Kenneth Kidd, deals most extensively with the subject of children's literature and ecocriticism. In their introduction, Dobrin and Kidd outline the relatively few existing ecocritical projects that deal with this subject, citing a special issue of the American Nature Writing Newsletter (spring 1995) as well as a guest edited issue of the Children's Literature Quarterly (winter 1994-95) as two of the most relevant projects of this type (Dobrin and Kidd 3). However, the majority of relevant studies are not explicitly ecocritical and fall into the realm of children's literature studies or interdisciplinary studies, drawing attention to the lack of ecocritical theory being practiced with texts written for children.

It seems that ecocritical theory is largely reserved for adults. This is an unfortunate condition of this critical genre, for it is in children's literature that we first engage both as readers and as young people interacting with the environment. As discussed in my introduction, Martha Nussbaum's asserts that fiction provides us with models for how to live ethically in the world (Nussbaum xvi). It is on children's literature then that we should be focusing at least some of our

attention when trying to decipher how and why children form ideas about how they should interact with the environment. It is not that I am advocating a complete rewrite of the children's literature we might deem "environmentally unfriendly" here (while I do believe that some contemporary children's literature written with an environmentalist ethic is valuable and necessary.) I am simply pointing out that there is much to learn about how children engage with the environment through the texts that they encounter. Texts such as Alice's Adventures in Wonderland can be read (and read aloud<sup>8</sup>) with an environmental ethic in mind, providing an open door (or rabbit hole as the case may be) for formative discussions about environmental relationships.

### *Alice, Alice, Everywhere...*

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Carroll's beloved tale of childhood struggle and metamorphosis in a strange dreamland has been appropriated into all parts of Western culture. From science to song lyrics, political satire to mathematical theory, medical research to drug culture, Alice and the characters she encounters in Wonderland have been quoted, parodied and analyzed at length (Brooker). Often scholarship focused on Alice's Adventures in Wonderland addresses the personal life of Lewis Carroll in addition to the characteristics of his fantastical text. As a result the murky details of Lewis Carroll's life, or more appropriately Carroll's real life as Charles L. Dodgson, are analyzed as a text in much the same ways that critics approach Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. The first such text was a published essay by A.M.E. Goldschmidt in 1933, entitled "*Alice in Wonderland* Psychoanalyzed" which was, at the time, considered a parody of Freudian theory (Brooker xvi). Taken up by other students of psychoanalysis in the 1930s through to the 50s, Goldschmidt's version of Carroll as a "repressed pervert" and Wonderland as his "coded expression of abnormal desires" has permeated scholarship of Carroll and his writing through to the present (Brooker xvii). Alice's Adventures in Wonderland has also been analyzed using

phenomenological approaches, anthropological techniques, and as a parody of religion to name but a few existing studies (Holbrook; McCarter; Carpenter). Deborah Ross offers an interesting feminist analysis of both Carroll's story and the Disney version of Alice. In particular she points out that Carroll's original version is much more comfortable with the presentation of anarchy in Wonderland, while the Disney version is much more conservative, treating anarchy as something to be avoided and suppressed. Alice's encounter with the Cheshire Cat and her experience on the Queen's croquet field are even both mentioned by Jacques Derrida in his critique of philosophical distinctions between humans and animals ("The Animal" 376-378).

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland continues to be cited as an important piece of children's fantasy, and a particularly readable work which appeals to children and adults alike. As a work of fantasy, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland urges readers to embrace a new perspective of the world around them, and provides an opportunity to explore Wonderland rather than expecting that readers behave in a certain way (as children's realist fiction so often does) (O'Keefe 12). It is surprising then, there have been to date no analyses Alice's Adventures in Wonderland from an ecocritical standpoint. For an ecocritic, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is an ideal text to explore as parts of Carroll's story are routinely confused for reality: Alice is routinely mistaken for Alice Liddell. The text has been adapted for the screen no less than six times, once as a Disney feature length cartoon, and provides the macabre setting for numerous videogames (Brooker 199). Further, the text has been appropriated as a representation of countless other environments, including (but certainly not limited to) a representation of the trials of childhood itself and the setting for a quiet paedophile's imaginings (Booker, xiii - xvii). This text then, is a rich example of how reality may influence fiction, and vice versa.

Both Alice and Wonderland have very real relationships with issues of nature and the environment in very tangible ways. Traditionally (following Locke and Rousseau) the construct of

"child" is equated with the construct of "nature"<sup>9</sup> and as such, both *Alice* and *Wonderland* tell us something about environmental attitudes, as well as ways of envisioning childhood towards the end of the nineteenth century. They also challenge us to look at our environment as Alice looks at *Wonderland*: with curiosity and childlike belief, a sort of intense negotiation between nonsense and understanding. As a children's story of fantasy the portrayal of Alice's relationship with her environment encourages young readers to expand their understanding of their own environment by exploring completely hypothetical situations in another world (O'Keefe 12). As a good piece of writing, it serves the same purpose for adults. The complexity of Alice's encounters with *Wonderland* challenges us to further explore *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a text and the ways in which we conceptualize our environment in light of our reading of such a text. The importance of an ecocritical analysis, one that focuses on environmental relationships and consequence, finds its strongest evidence in the environmental change in our everyday reality and the resulting change in our environmental relationships. As Carroll was writing in the 1860s, environmental concern was in its infancy. Now, over a hundred and fifty years later, as the consequences of the industrial revolution and the resulting exploitation and devastation of environment are so apparent, our concern for environmental issues has exploded. As our ability (and tendency) to impact the environment has increased, so too has the importance of the ecocritical perspective on the literature that is informing children and adults alike in their behaviour in such an environment.

***"All in a Golden Afternoon..."***

Because, as O'Keefe points out, we so often forget the details of fantasy stories, erasing with them the textures of the plotline, the feelings the characters evoke from us, and the excitement that always lurks just around the corner, I will provide a short summary of *Alice's Adventures in*

Wonderland (19). Carroll's story begins with a poem which describes the conception of the story in its entirety "All in the golden afternoon", introducing us to the Liddell sisters. Broken into twelve chapters, the plotline follows Alice, a curious and cheeky seven year old girl, as she stumbles upon Wonderland and navigates through this strange world, with its strange creatures. Sitting upon a bank, Alice becomes bored with her sister's book, which has no pictures, "and what is the use of a book...without pictures or conversations?" (1). Alice spies and follows a White Rabbit wearing a waistcoat and checking his pocket-watch down a rabbit hole and into Wonderland. Each time she eats or drinks she shrinks or grows, finding herself in precarious situations as a result. When she is large, Alice cries so much she produces a pool of tears, finds herself stuck inside the White Rabbit's house, meets an angry pigeon in the tree tops, and musters up enough courage to stand up to the Queen of Hearts. When small, Alice falls into her own pool of tears, has an angry discussion with the Caterpillar, goes to a Mad Tea Party, and plays croquet with the Queen. Alice finds throughout her time in Wonderland that she cannot properly recite the verses she knows by heart: they escape her lips as parodies of those verses and the morals that lie beneath them. She learns that the King and Queen of Hearts are the rulers of Wonderland, and that the Queen has a terrible temper and a penchant for beheadings. She ends up in court, giving her evidence against the Knave of Hearts (who allegedly stole the Queen's tarts) and criticizing the legal system in Wonderland. Alice finally wakes up in a flurry of activity, and realizes that Wonderland, and all the creatures in it, had been part of a dream and scurries off to tea.

***Alice and Environment: Alice's changing size and relations in Wonderland***

"Well, I should like to be a little larger, Sir, if you wouldn't mind," said Alice: "three inches is such a wretched height to be."

"It is a very good height indeed!" said the Caterpillar angrily, rearing itself upright as it spoke (it was exactly three inches high).

(33)

Throughout Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Alice undergoes several size changes, each thereby changing her relationship with the people and places in Wonderland. Each time Alice ingests food or drink in Wonderland her size is altered in unexpected but not completely unpredictable ways. Alice finds that it is the products of her environment that are working on her to change her, for good or bad. While unexpected and surprising to Alice, the changes that her body undergoes as a result of being in Wonderland are not completely void of order: it is simply not an order that Alice understands. Those who inhabit Wonderland, however, understand it completely: what is bizarre to Alice is "natural" to them.

As Alice makes her way through Wonderland she begins to utilize the environment in ways that are more suited to her needs, adjusting her behaviour and her sense of self to function more successfully in such an unfamiliar (and fantastical) environment . By listening to and watching the creatures she encounters, Alice learns to manipulate her size in very deliberate ways, as very specific responses to various situations. In particular, following her discussion with the enigmatic Caterpillar (which ends in the Caterpillar storming off, offended by an insensitive comment from Alice), Alice breaks off a bit of each side of the mushroom he had been perched upon, for he has advised that one side will make her smaller, the other larger. Alice experiments with the effects of ingesting the mushroom, wildly altering her body in the process. She continues to experiment until she understands the relation between how much she eats and the change in her size. The mushroom, unlike the little bottles labeled DRINK ME, does not come with instructions and Alice must rely on the ecological knowledge of the Caterpillar to safely navigate this environment (he acts as if she is dull for not already possessing such information, for surely *everyone* should know what is safe to eat without help of a label). She then utilizes her new understanding to help her deal more successfully with the situations in which she finds herself.



Upon approaching the house of the Duchess, for example, Alice eats a bit of the right-hand side of the Caterpillar's mushroom, the side that she has discovered will make her smaller. She recognizes the inappropriateness of her size for the situation at hand, and alters her height accordingly:

[S]he came suddenly upon an open place, with a little house in it about four feet high. 'Whoever lives there,' thought Alice, 'it'll never do to come upon them *this* size: why, I should frighten them out of their wits!' So she began nibbling at the right-hand bit again, and did not venture to go near the house till she had brought herself down to nine inches high. (35)

After leaving the Duchess' house she encounters the Cheshire cat, who points her in the direction of the March Hare. As Alice comes upon the house of the March Hare, she sees that it is quite a lot larger than the last house, and so eats the left-hand side of the mushroom so that she may enter into that environment more comfortably:

It was so large a house, that she did not like to go nearer till she had nibbled some more of the left- hand bit of mushroom, and raised herself to about two feet high: even then she walked up towards it rather timidly, saying to herself 'suppose it should be raving mad after all! I almost wish I'd gone to see the Hatter instead!' (43)

Whenever she can, Alice uses her changing size as a way to empower and reimagine herself in the various environments she enters into. It seems that Alice's mastery of her changing size can be read as a reference to childhood experience itself. While contested, the idea that childhood is separated into developmental stages, which must be mastered before "normal" development can proceed, permeates developmental theory and child psychology. Alice's mastery of her own size change indicates a maturity that she develops as the story progresses, and an increasing level of understanding of her surroundings. At the moments when Alice controls her change in size, she is pleased with her understanding of herself as a part of her environment and her own environmental wisdom. When her size changes unexpectedly (or when she finds that the words to the lessons she has memorized come out of her mouth all wrong), her understanding of

her place in the environment, and indeed her sense of self, is thrown into chaos, and she wonders if “anything would *ever* happen in a natural way again” (71). It is in these moments that Alice recognizes her own naivety with respect to the “nature” of things, and struggles with how she can change her situation.

Alice faces numerous challenges in Wonderland, the roots of which scholars have debated at length about (Booker xvi-xvii). Although Alice cannot fully integrate herself into the environment of Wonderland she does begin to adapt to the challenges the place presents as she spends more time there and becomes more accustomed to its idiosyncrasies (McCarter 49). Alice’s difficulty stems, in part, from her inability to relate to the environment of Wonderland as she can to her own<sup>10</sup> (McCarter 49). However, it is also a result of her childlike understanding of the importance of size for an individual in environmental relations, and in her unwillingness (or inability) to accept that her understanding cannot be successfully applied to the situations she encounters in Wonderland. When Alice is small she feels easily pushed around and must defend herself with reason and intellect:

Very soon the Rabbit noticed Alice, as she went hunting about, and called out to her, in an angry tone, “Why, Mary Ann, what *are* you doing out here? Run home this moment, and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan! Quick now!” And Alice was so much frightened that she ran off at once in the direction it pointed to, without trying to explain the mistake that it had made. “He took me for his housemaid,” she said to herself as she ran. “How surprised he’ll be when he finds out who I am! But I’d better take him his fan and gloves – that is, if I can find them.” (19)

When Alice is large it is she who does the bullying as she defends herself with force and self-assuredness:

She drew her foot as far down the chimney as she could, and waited till she heard a little animal (she couldn’t guess of what sort it was) scratching and scrambling about in the chimney close above her: then, saying to herself “This is Bill”, she gave one sharp kick, and waited to see what would happen next. (23)

Alice's understanding of the way that the environment and the beings within it interact is simplistic: large equals bully, small equals bullied. The environment of Wonderland though, is much more complex. Some of the most powerful characters in Carroll's story are those who are small in size. For instance the White Rabbit, who is normal rabbit sized, begins and then drives the plotline of Alice's adventures. The Rabbit is also a highly respected member of the Wonderland community as he holds a position in the Queen's court and has a housemaid. The Caterpillar, one of the smallest beings in Carroll's story, is one of the most insightful, intelligent, and strong characters encountered by Alice. He directs questions at Alice that cause her to rethink her understanding of herself and her place in the environment. He also gives Alice her most useful physical tool for coping with her sometimes frightening and often confusing new surroundings: the size changing sides of the mushroom. He shows his power further as he chastises Alice for her insensitivity and ignorance of her surroundings. These characters challenge the reader to rethink Alice's conception (as well as our own) of the importance of size in relating to the environment.

To take this point further, the disorientation that Alice feels as a result of her changing size can be read as a metaphor for the social changes that were happening in England (and all over the world) as Carroll was writing Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Urban populations were exploding, and the industrial revolution was well underway. Change was constant. All aspects of life were getting bigger; there were more people, more machines, more products, more laws, more competition. Alice's plight in Wonderland would have, and still does, feel oddly familiar to readers attempting to deal with their real life encounters of unfamiliar and nonsensical situations. It is the connection between the emotions evoked from the reader in the act of reading fiction to those of an individual's encounters in everyday life that lends so much power to Carroll's text. Wonderland, like nineteenth century England or twenty-first century Toronto, is a confusing and overwhelming place.

Adjusting to changes in size, or climate change, or changes in government, are frustrating and puzzling to say the least.

It is evident that the relationship between size and the environment in Wonderland (and out) is much more complex than Alice imagines. The beings of Wonderland acknowledge and interact with Alice no matter what size she is, but it is she who feels the need to alter her size depending upon circumstance. All of the characters in the story also interact with each other, regardless of their size during the Queen's croquet game and again in the courtroom. Throughout these scenes the creatures in Wonderland behave as they normally would, but Alice alters her behaviour as her changing size also changes her sense of self and how she conceptualizes her relationship to her surroundings. This in turn effects her understanding of how it is acceptable to act. For a child (or perhaps a corporation), to be larger is to have more power; Alice enacts this understanding throughout the story.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland may also serve as an example of our own understanding of broader environmental relationships. The impact that Alice has on the environment of Wonderland is directly related to her size, much like we might understand the varying environmental footprints of corporations, cars, or even cities. However, Carroll only comments on the effect of size in Alice's environmental relations, he does not offer his readers a more environmentally friendly alternative. When large, Alice has devastating effects on her surroundings, evidenced by the damage she causes in the pool of tears, and as she grows too large inside of the White Rabbit's house.

[S]he soon made out that she was in the pool of tears which she had wept when she was nine feet high. "I wish I hadn't cried so much!" said Alice, as she swam about, trying to find her way out. "I shall be punished for it now, I suppose, by being drowned in my own tears! That *will* be a queer thing, to be sure! However, everything is queer to-day." (10)

Then came the pattering of feet on the stairs. Alice knew it was the Rabbit coming to look for her, and she trembled till she shook the house, quite forgetting that she was now about a thousand times as large as the Rabbit, and had no reason to be afraid of it. (21)

As Alice changes size, her perception of her own ability to interact with the environment lags behind; as she grows taller she often does not alter her behaviour quickly enough to prevent environmental damage. However, it is not Alice's ability to interact with the environment that is in flux. She can have formative and responsible relationships with Wonderland regardless of her size, but her potential for impacting the environment grows or shrinks with her. Her inability to perceive her own potential to do damage causes her to fumble through her time in Wonderland, leaving significant damage in her wake, and causing her relationship with her surroundings to be largely frustrating. Carroll's story presents its readers with an insightful commentary on the relationship between size and the potential for environmental impact, and suggests that there is a responsibility towards the environment inherent in such a relationship. Alice fails to recognize her responsibility until it is too late, negatively affecting Wonderland as she goes. This could be read, perhaps, as a reflection of the naiveté of industrialization in Britain, as it ambled towards moral irresponsibility and environmental destruction. Carroll's commentary applies not only to nineteenth century England, but also to present day environmental interactions as the same industrial ethic prevails: like a child that never grew up.

### ***Environment and Alice: The Changing Environment and Alice's Response.***

The garden has always been a space at odds with itself in children's literature (and indeed beyond). As Dobrin and Kidd describe, "here the child is situated in his or her ostensibly natural habitat, even if the garden represents a compromise of sorts, at once domestic and wild, outside the home but nearby – at once familiar and new. The garden is not only the classic Judeo-

Christian space of renewal but also a literalization or employment of the child's organic innocence"

(6). It is not surprising that this combination of "familiar and new" figures in Alice.

Following her surprise encounter with the White Rabbit and her fall down the rabbit hole, Alice spies a beautiful garden beyond a tiny locked door. Alice spends much of the story trying to get into this Garden. For Alice, the Garden represents a sort of utopia: "How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway..." (4) Here, as Dobrin and Kidd suggest, Alice is attempting to enter into a space that, in children's literature, is largely reserved solely for children. Alas, Alice finds that she cannot enter into this space. At least not right away: she has grown too large and can't fit through the little door. Her entrance into the beautiful garden doesn't occur until Chapter VIII, when Alice finds herself back in the little hallway and has learned how to use the tools available to her to adjust herself to exactly the right size to unlock and pass through the door. Interestingly, then, Alice needs to have successfully negotiated the relationship between familiarity and newness, achieving a higher level of environmental wisdom, in order, at last, to enter the garden.

Upon her arrival, she finds that the garden is not what she expected it to be, in fact it is not a utopia at all. As she first enters, Alice encounters the Red Queen's workers painting a tree of white roses red: "A large rose-tree stood near the entrance of the garden: the roses growing on it were white, but there were three gardeners at it, busily painting them red. Alice thought this a very curious thing, and she went nearer to watch them" (51). Alice is immediately presented with the artificial "nature" of this garden in Wonderland, and the reader is presented with the very same commentary on gardens in the realm of non-fiction. This garden is manicured according to an irrational ruler's whim, its hedgehogs used as croquet balls, its birds (however far from their natural

habitat they have wandered) used as mallets (55). This garden, in short, is an extremely mediated encounter with nature.

As Charles Dodgson was a don at Christ Church, in Oxford and an ordained deacon of the Church of England, Carpenter suggests that Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is a parody of all religion, and Christianity in particular (65). This is somewhat surprising given his other writing which is mostly pious and sentimental (Carpenter 44). In particular, Carroll parodies the common moral tales taught to children in the nineteenth century in Alice's wrongly recited lessons throughout the story. It was these explicitly Christian lessons that Carroll attacked, lessons which commonly asserted that "idle and thoughtless children would soon die an unpleasant death and then suffer everlasting torment in Hell" (Carpenter 2). The garden then, for Carpenter, is a "cruel parody of Heaven where divine justice takes the form of the Queen of Hearts forever screaming 'Off with her head!' Moreover, Alice's attempts to get into the garden introduce into the story another element of religious parody...are not the 'very small cake' and the delicious liquid which Alice eats and drinks the elements of Holy Communion, Christ's body and blood?" (66) Alice's entry into the garden then is supremely disappointing, as she finds not what she is looking for (Paradise) but more of the chaos and nonsense that occur in everyday life. Heaven looks a lot like a Monday in this reading, and nature is not a paradise after all but a constant negotiation between chaos and nonsense.

In addition, the garden can be read as a metaphor for civilized English society, with the exploitation of natural resources (hedgehogs for balls, flamingos for croquet clubs) and the imposition of rules of conduct that may be bent by the ruling class. It is also through the garden that we are introduced to Carroll's parody of the penal system, as the Queen sentences anyone in her path to death. This parody continues from outdoors to in, as the courtroom scene presents a biting satire of jury trials. The jury is made up of "stupid" animals, the Queen insists that the sentence be read before the verdict, and the evidence is incomprehensibly vague. Alice is horrified at the

injustice she witnesses, but unable to effectively change the system in place. At this, she grows so frustrated that she wakes herself from her dream, and Wonderland vanishes. As a representation of the legal system governing industrial England, this interaction comments not only on the absurdity of various aspects of the courtroom (most notably the jury and the ascription of final judgment to one individual), but also on the futility of the hope for change as a result of an individual outside of the system itself. Alice's frustration is a representation of all the hope for change that will never be realized.

Alice has considerable trouble dealing with the unexpected scene before her in the garden. The unusual use of the creatures in the garden causes her great concern (although she does not express this concern to anyone in authority and continues to play the game for fear of her own safety) and she cannot, no matter how hard she tries, reconcile her understanding of the gardens that she is used to with the one in which she finds herself in Wonderland. Nor can the creatures being used as croquet equipment accept their new and "unnatural" role without protest or difficulty; the flamingo croquet mallets become unruly and the hedgehog balls get up and walk away. The characters in the garden have an agency that industrial England did not: perhaps Carroll's way of ascribing agency and a voice to his own environment, and all the creatures in it. Even more disturbing for Alice though, is the lawlessness that governs the garden and those who inhabit it, a lawlessness maintained throughout the story but reaching its pinnacle in the Red Queen's domain. The Red Queen's tendency to sentence her subjects to death by beheading is uncharacteristic of Alice's understanding of what happens in the gardens that surround her home. As discussed earlier, Dobrin and Kidd point out that gardens are essentially a place of safety and wonder, *not* the space in which beheadings take place. Carroll disrupts this notion along with the ideal of the garden as Eden, through Alice's less than utopic experiences. He highlights that, for him, neither



childhood nor industrial society are idyllic and that the paradise we are encouraged to seek through both Christian and capitalist ideals may in fact be more like an ambiguous hell.

The garden is certainly not the only place of environmental inconsistency in Wonderland. The last chapter of Lewis Carroll's story, "Alice's Evidence," serves as the culmination of Alice's frustrations with Wonderland: the courtroom is an environment completely devoid of lawfulness, with its shifting rules and quick decisions. It is in this space where Alice fails most completely to cope with her new and confusing surroundings. She speaks out of turn, using her increasing size to stand up to the Queen. Alice becomes so frustrated that she becomes uncharacteristically rude, all the more surprising given her age and her gender. Her behaviour mirrors the differences between the environment in Wonderland and the spaces she is accustomed to. In her view Wonderland is very "curious," but to the creatures of Wonderland, it is her behaviour that is curious.

### *The Un-silenced Wonderland: Nature as a character in Carroll's story*

In keeping with the definition of nature that I outlined in the introduction to this study, nature is that which is not built by humans; almost everything in Wonderland can be considered "nature." As Christopher Manes points out, "Nature *is* silent in our culture (and in literate societies generally) in the sense that the status of being a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an exclusively human prerogative" (15). Nature in Carroll's Wonderland however, is decidedly *not* silent. This animism is a condition of much of children's literature: speaking animals and flowers are prolific and intimately related to the tendency to see children as part of nature themselves,<sup>11</sup> and indeed Piaget asserts that one of the characteristics of childhood is animism (Dobrin and Kidd 6; Chawala 26). But Wonderland and all of its creatures are *particularly* articulate, and they are also awfully critical of Alice. For example, we encounter a mother Pigeon who chastises a very tall Alice for eating eggs, comparing her relentlessly to a serpent:

"I *have* tasted eggs, certainly" said Alice, who was a very truthful child; "but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know."

"I don't believe it," said the Pigeon; "but if they do, why, then they're a kind of serpent: that's all I can say."

This was such a new idea to Alice, that she was quite silent for a minute or two, which gave the Pigeon the opportunity of adding "You're looking for eggs, I know *that* well enough; and what does it matter to me whether you're a little girl or a serpent?" (34)

Earlier in this exchange, the pigeon discusses the amount of energy it takes to produce her eggs, as well as the amount of effort and ingenuity required to keep them safe. In this way, Carroll holds Alice accountable for her actions in Wonderland, and also outside of it. Earlier in the story, Alice encounters a Mouse awash in Alice's own pool of tears, and he expresses fear and displeasure when Alice mentions Dinah, her beloved cat. This causes Alice to recognize her ignorance at another being's situation:

"[O]h dear!" cried Alice in a sorrowful tone. "I'm afraid I've offended it again!" For the Mouse was swimming away from her as hard as I could go, and making quite a commotion in the pool as it went. So she called softly after it, "Mouse dear! Do come back again, and we wo'n't talk about cats, or dogs either, if you don't like them!" When the Mouse heard this, it turned round and swam slowly back to her: its face was quite pale (with passion, Alice thought), and it said, in a low trembling voice, "Let us get to the shore, and then I'll tell you my history, and you'll understand why it is I hate cats and dogs." (12)

This story brings us to another tendency of the creatures in Wonderland; they do not only speak up for themselves, but they also transfer their knowledge to Alice through language. The Mouse, the Cheshire Cat, the Mock Turtle and the Caterpillar all show a deep understanding of the environment of Wonderland, and the laws that govern it. In particular, the Mouse tells Alice the story of why he hates cats and dogs, a story that bends and twists along the page in the shape of the Mouse's tail. Here, and throughout the story, Carroll plays with the language that Alice uses to acquire information – and that the reader also utilizes in following the plot. Therefore a "tale" manifests itself as a "tail" for a mouse. This moment in the story not only plays with language but also with Cartesian duality. The mind and body are not split for Alice or the Mouse here; the mind,

the product of which is the story, is played out on the very body of the Mouse. Alice is so distracted by this (for it is so very contrary to her understanding of reality) that she cannot concentrate on the story, offends the Mouse yet again, and causes him to hurry off. In this sequence, the words of the Mouse are transferred onto his very being. As a part of nature, the Mouse's story then is written on the environment itself. This exchange transcends our understanding of how language functions upon the environment, and necessarily upon us.

Each of the creatures in Wonderland attempt to help Alice along her way, challenging her to comprehend her situation more fully and to articulate her needs and desires more clearly. Overall, Alice fails to understand their attempts. Although the words are the same, Alice's language is irreconcilable with the language that these creatures speak, and she projects her difference onto the creatures of Wonderland. Alice will not, perhaps even cannot, recognize that it is she who is new to this land; it is she who does not understand its creatures or laws. As a representation of industrial modernity, Alice's inability (an often unwillingness) to understand the creatures in Wonderland points to the incompatibility of pre-industrial and industrial values, goals, and ways of living. Alice cannot understand creatures that speak for themselves for they do not fit with her own understanding of the industrial world, a world in which nature and culture are separate entities all together.

Why we may ask, does Carroll chose to give the more-than-human beings in his story such agency? Does this merely heighten the nonsensical whimsy of the story – or could it be an experiment with what a White Rabbit might say? Is this just for fun – or is it political and ethical commentary? I believe that the ability of the creatures in Wonderland to speak for themselves is a way for Carroll not only to criticize and parody the world around him, but also to challenge his reader to do the same. Whatever the intention, what is most important is that the more-than-human characters in the story are *not* silent, and moreover in their ability to speak they are not docile or

inarticulate in any way. Wonderland provides its child reader with an alternate view of reality, a view which includes Caterpillars that stick up for themselves and Pigeons that complain about how much extra work they have to do to protect their eggs from those who wish to eat them (serpents or little girls). This in turn challenges readers to expand their understanding of nature, and to reconceptualize the relationship between language, nature and themselves.

Beyond the more-than-human beings that speak for themselves, Carroll challenges our Western view of how nature operates at an even more fundamental level: playing with time itself. Alice is confronted by her inability to conceptualize time in the same manner as the other creatures in Wonderland early in the story, first when she enters the caucus race. "There was no 'One, two, three, and away!', but they began running when they liked, and left off when they liked, so that it was not easy to know when the race was over" (15). While Alice runs with the rest of the creatures, her notion of time inhibits her understanding of the race. The race does not stop at a certain time or after a certain number of laps, but rather when the majority of the creatures running have moved around enough to dry off. The creatures in Wonderland do not subscribe to a modern industrialist understanding of time, but rather accept that it has an agency all its (his) own. In a discussion with the Mad Hatter, Alice is introduced to the notion of time, or rather the character of Time in Wonderland.

"If you knew Time as well as I do," said the Hatter, "you wouldn't talk about wasting *it*. It's *him*."

"I don't know what you mean," said Alice.

"Of course you don't!" the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously. "I dare say you never even spoke to Time!"

"Perhaps not," Alice cautiously replied; "but I know I have to beat time when I learn music."

"Ah! That accounts for it," said the Hatter. "He wo'n't stand beating. Now if you only kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock. For instance, suppose it were nine o'clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons: you'd only have to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling! Half-past one, time for dinner!" ... "Is that the way *you* manage?" Alice asked. The Hatter shook his head mournfully. "Not I!" he replied. "We quarreled last March – just before *he* went mad you know" (pointing with his teaspoon at the March Hare). (46)

Here, Time, rather than being a linear, modern industrial construct, is presented as a character with which one can quarrel. In this way, Carroll encourages his readers to imagine what it would be like if we did not conceive of time as proceeding in a straight line. Alice cannot cope with this alternative understanding of time and becomes frustrated and even angry as the tea party continues around the table, forever at six o'clock. Alice, having grown up in industrial England, cannot rectify her understanding of time as an animate being: the notion of time as a currency, something to be bought and sold, is so deeply rooted in her understanding of the world that she cannot consider the validity of other world views. This demonstrates to the reader the consequence of a narrow understanding of such a complex issue like time, as Alice leaves the Tea Party in a huff, failing to engage with any of the guests. Looking at the strangeness of time in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland in another way, one might imagine that Alice's frustrations represent a general frustration in the late nineteenth century with the increased focus on time. With the introduction of the steam engine, the increase in wage labour, and with increased capital, time became more of a commodity: something to be allotted, saved, bought, and sold. Carroll's assertion that Time can be made angry points to a different way of valuing time: not as a currency, but as an entity in and of itself.

### *When Alice Woke Up...*

From the above discussion it is easy to surmise that Wonderland is not a place of wonder for Alice, but one of frustration and misunderstanding. It can also be read as a representation of the trials of childhood and the childhood of industrial modernity. The environment of Wonderland is new to Alice, much like our environments are new to us as children. Wonderland, and all the creatures in it, is not nonsensical, it is just nonsensical to Alice (McCarter 52). As Alice wanders through the

unfamiliar environment into which she is thrust, we as readers discover, misunderstand, and learn with her. Alice finds herself ill equipped to deal with the challenges that confront her in Wonderland as the tools she possesses can only help her deal with her own environment, not a new and very different one (McCarter 52). This is the power of Lewis Carroll's story. In accompanying Alice on her exciting, frustrating, and formative journey we learn strategies for dealing with our own environment, and the confusing situations we encounter in it. Alice helps us to think outside of our normal realm of possibility, encouraging creative problem solving and new ways of engaging with our environment.

Carroll gives his Wonderland an agency that is rarely seen in children's books. The environment is not an evil, menacing place, nor it is a safe place; it is different. Wonderland does not fit the stereotypical presentation of the environment found widely in children's literature: the garden is not a secret one, the landscape is not pastoral. Alice perceives that the environment is frustrating or hostile, enchanting or curious, subscribing variously to these stereotypes, but her perception changes depending upon her size and her feeling of security. Carroll's Wonderland speaks up when it is mistreated, presenting readers with different ways to conceptualize complex issues such as time, lawfulness, and environmental exploitation. It also challenges readers to look beyond the words on the page and discover metaphor, religion, and mathematical theory buried in the text. As such, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is a story rich in subtext, and lends itself to a very interesting and informative ecocritical reading.

Stories written for children can elucidate popularly held attitudes towards the environment to a greater extent than any other type of literature, resulting from the belief that children are more connected to the natural world (Lesnik-Oberstein 216). This ability is twofold. First, through the inclusion of ecology, environment, and nature in writing for children, important environmental issues surface through the (typically pastoral) story content itself. Second, since the construction of

nature and the construction of the child are so intimately linked, the portrayal of one within a story will inform the reading of the other. In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland nature is unpredictable and strong. Similarly, Alice goes through many changes, both in mind and body, but remains headstrong, curious, and intelligent throughout the story. Alice would not be able to have the adventures she has in Wonderland if the environment were a "safe" or "innocent" nature, or if she were an "obedient" or "innocent" girl. Carroll's understanding and portrayal of both the constructs of nature and the child are not only complex, but also contrary to commonly held beliefs at the time, beliefs about the "naturalness" of children and of women, which have largely persisted into modern thought (Aitken 27). Books such as Alice's Adventures in Wonderland thus provide readers the tools with which they may challenge and subvert hegemonic ideals. From an ecocritical standpoint, these books are especially important when attempting to address and challenge thought surrounding environmental issues. As per Nussbaum, books which challenge the reader to consider another point of view aid in the development of ethical behaviour, in this case, behaviour toward the environment.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is one of those rare books that crosses the boundary between children's literature and literature loved by all (O'Keefe 13). Its play between fantasy and reality provides an important opportunity for discussion of environmental, social, and ethical issues. It allows the reader to connect Alice's trials in her new environment with their own, encouraging creative thinking and more innovative problem solving when dealing with environmental issues. However, Carroll does not present his readers with easy solutions to environmental issues as Alice, for the most part, fails to adapt to her environment. Carroll's message is not hopeful, as the future of the industrial England he experienced must have seemed bleak, but rather encourages a rethinking of environmental relations in light of a changing society. For an ecocritic Alice's Adventures in Wonderland provides a seemingly whimsical story of nonsense which is in fact rich

in environmental ideals, commentary, and subject matter. Reading Carroll's story ecocritically provides insights that may help subvert and change ways of thinking that are damaging to the environment, and all of us who live within it.



### Chapter 3

#### *Amanda in Weddingland (or The Day They Released the Doves)*

All in the Golden Afternoon  
Quite leisurely we decide;  
To bring two lives together as one,  
With two families beside.  
So off to Grandma's to share the news,  
For the wedding plans they'll guide!

Ah, wondrous pack! Within an hour,  
Beneath such dreary weather,  
They congregate in the tiniest kitchen  
To toast with Prosecco together,  
And speak of all the adventures ahead,  
For young lovers who promise forever.

Imperious Prima grabs her pen  
And says wildly "now to begin it":  
In milder tones Secunda hopes  
"Will there be stilton in it?":  
The shy groom quietly sips his beer  
And hides his smile in it.

And so the ideas come pouring out,  
In fancy they pursue  
The dream-day moving through their minds  
Of wonders tasty and new,  
A three piece band, a tent, the dress -  
The best cake only will do!

And ever, as the family drained  
The wells of fancy dry,  
They wrote their wish list down at once  
To put the subject by,  
The bride called out "Enough I'm spent!"  
All laughed and said "But why?!"

Thus grew the tale of Weddingland:  
All the details, one by one,  
Its quaint events were well planned out -  
And now the day is done,  
Toward home we drive, a married two  
Beneath the rising sun.

Amanda! A magical wedding tale,  
Now with a careful hand,  
Lay it where two dreams collide

In matrimony's mystic band,  
Like a centerpiece's wither'd bunch of tulips  
Pluck'd in a far-off land.

### Down the Elevator Shaft

Amanda was getting very tired of sitting on the couch reading with her fiancé. The book she was flipping through was extremely dull and quite full of long boring words, and Kyle's magazine was no better. "What is the use of a magazine," thought Amanda, "if there are only pictures of sweaty drummers and oddly shaped sticks?"

So, she was considering in her own mind (as best she could as the ecocritical article she had been reading had left her feeling quite sleepy and stupid) if the pleasure of turning on the TV would be worth the trouble of trying to find a program worth watching, when she suddenly heard a cooing in the hallway.

It was not that the cooing was so remarkable in and of itself, but having never heard such a noise in a condo before, Amanda had her shoes on and was out the door without a second thought. As she ran quickly down the hallway she wondered how long it would take Kyle to notice that she was missing.

As Amanda rounded the corner of the rust colored hallway she saw a large white dove wearing a little blue bow tie hop effortlessly into the elevator. Following as quickly as she could, she too hopped through the open elevator door. Much to her surprise, Amanda found herself falling down the elevator shaft, wondering where the elevator had gotten to. "Where," she thought, "could the elevator be at this time of the day? I'm sure he doesn't have an appointment elsewhere. If he did, he should have let the building manager know, for this is quite unacceptable! I will be sure to leave a complaint for Joe once I get out of here!"

"Oh dear," she thought aloud, "how will Kyle ever find me down here? I do hope he remembers to water the plants." She looked around and to her surprise she found that the walls of the shaft were covered with things: shiny things, small things, big things, squishy things, all manner of things that one would not expect to see when falling down an elevator shaft.

Now, either the elevator shaft was much deeper than she had ever considered or she was falling very slowly, for Amanda had all the time she needed to wonder at what would become of her once she finally hit the basement floor.

Amanda reached out her hand and plucked a small silk pouch off a shelf as she fell. As she examined the pouch she mused, "This is one of those little gifts I've gotten before. What are they called? Bombs-of-married? No, that doesn't sound right at all!" (And it certainly was not right, but Amanda had a habit of thinking out loud, then trying to make it sound like she knew what she was talking about to anyone who might be listening.)

"But if I do remember correctly," she continued merrily, "it is good luck to break a tooth on one of these little candies. I think I have also heard that if you put them under your pillow you will get to sleep with the bride. Or maybe it's luck that you get? Either way it all seems very silly to me." And with that she threw the pouch up into the air in an attempt to place it back on the shelf from which she had taken it (because her mother had tried *very* hard to teach her that everything had a place.) In a moment the little pouch turned around and came falling down the shaft after her. As Amanda was wondering what she should look at next, she hit the basement floor with a thump, and the little pouch smacked her in the top of her head with a "bop!"

### The Little Red Button

Although startled, Amanda picked herself up off the greasy basement floor and found that she was not a bit hurt (except for a tender bottom and a grease smudge on her jeans which, considering the circumstances, seemed like very little damage.) She looked around anxiously to see if she could find where the white dove had gone but it seemed that she was all alone. With the elevator gone, she had no idea how she would ever get home again.

So, with nothing else to do, Amanda wandered down the little hallway until she came to a door. She tried to open the door but alas it was locked. Around and around she looked for a key, but there was none. With nothing else to do she sat on the cold concrete and cried.

"Oh my, what am I to do?" Amanda cried. "If only there was a way to get someone to open the door!" As she put her head back to cry a little more she spied a small red button that she had not seen before. "Press Me" read a small sign in big bold letters beneath the small button. "Well," Amanda thought aloud, "I know that one should usually only push a red button in an emergency, for they often stop the train, or set off an alarm, or eject a seat." (For you see, Amanda had once seen a boy on the train press a red button, and she could remember the scolding he received very clearly.) "But," she continued, "I am not sitting in a seat and I am certainly not on a train, and this *is* a sort of an emergency, so I guess it's okay." And with that she pushed the button. There was no alarm. In fact, nothing happened. Amanda pushed the button again and waited. Growing impatient, she pushed the button again, and this time a shrill voice called out: "WHAT? Who goes there?"

"Hello sir, this is Amanda from 807," Amanda said as she looked around wildly for the voice. "I am stuck in the basement and the elevator seems to be otherwise engaged. Can you please open the door?" The voice seemed to be coming from above, but Amanda couldn't find a speaker anywhere.

"Amanda from what?" the voice asked.

"Amanda from 807" she said a little louder and more slowly. "I live upstairs. Can you please open the door?"

"What is the make and colour of your car please? And who are you visiting?" demanded the voice.

"No, you don't understand, I *live* here!" Amanda shouted.

"Well of course you live there," the voice said impatiently, "I am alive where I am too! But do you reside in this building miss?"

Amanda sighed. She made a little mental note to write a complaint about this security officer too. "Yes sir. I do. I reside in unit 807. My name is Amanda. Please open the door."

"Well miss, that was all you needed to say" the voice said. There was a loud buzz, and the door clicked. Amanda grabbed the door handle, yanked the door open, and went through as quickly as she could. She followed the driveway up toward the garage door. Around and around she went, up and up, until she could see the light from outside as the garage door was closing. And through the door she caught a glimpse of the white dove as he made his way onto the street, cooing as he went.

"Little dove," shouted Amanda, "wait, please! I just want to ask you where you are going, and how you managed to get past security!" Amanda slipped under the garage door just before it closed and followed the sound of the dove's coo down the busy midday sidewalk.

\* \*

### A Crazy Cake-Tasting

After several minutes of walking, Amanda came to the conclusion that she had lost the white dove with the blue bow tie and was also quite lost herself. She looked along the busy street for something familiar and thought, "Well, if I were to give someone advice on what to do if she becomes lost it would be that she should find a comfortable spot and wait until someone finds her." She looked around for a comfortable spot, but being a busy street comfortable spots were hard to come by. Besides, it was still quite cold out, and she had neglected to bring her sweater in her haste.

Amanda put her head in her hands and cried, "Oh why do I give such good advice that is so difficult to follow?" After pondering this question for a moment she continued (even though the people passing her on the street were beginning to think her quite odd), "Well of course good advice is hard to follow, or else it wouldn't be worth giving or taking in the first place!"

Now a little more optimistic, Amanda began looking for a good comfortable place to wait and be found. Suddenly, in a shop window she saw the most beautiful and delicious looking cake. "That is where I'll wait to be found!" she cried with glee. As she excitedly opened the front door of the shop, a little bell rang a cheerful welcome, followed by a chorus of equally cheerful greetings. "Hello! How are you today?" "Good afternoon miss!" "Well howdy! Would you like some cake?" "Come on in!" "Hi there, can I help you with anything? Could I get you some tea?"

Amanda was so overwhelmed by the greetings and questions thrown at her that she began to back slowly toward the door. Before she could turn around, a tall and lanky boy came toward her and touched her on the shoulder. Amanda noticed his very kind eyes but very bad complexion (presumably due to having access to cake all day long). He spoke with a voice that was not a boy's but not quite a man's either.

"Won't you come and sit down?" Jacob said (or at least that's what Amanda deduced his name to be, for that's what his name tag said it was). "Can I help you with anything? Get you a cup of tea perhaps?" As Jacob spoke he guided Amanda gently to a table painted the limiest of lime greens, with a little seat beside it which looked exquisitely comfortable (and was upholstered in the raspperriest of raspberry fabrics.)

"Why yes, sir," Amanda said, sitting down at the little table, "you can help me! I am getting married in a month, and need to find a wedding cake. You don't happen to have a catalogue do you?"

"Do we?" cried Jacob. "Why of course we do miss! I'll be right back! What do you take in your tea?" Without giving Amanda a chance to reply, he did a little spin on his large toes and disappeared behind the counter. Within another blink Jacob was back with a steaming hot cup of tea in his left hand, a bowl of sugar and a tiny jug of cream balanced securely on his left forearm. In his right hand he carried a large silver tray with seven tiny cakes beautifully arranged. Propped on the top of his oversized head was a giant and very well-worn book. Gracefully, and with

unbelievable speed, Jacob placed the tea, the sugar, the cream, the tray of cakes, and the giant book on the tiny lime table, pulled over a second little chair and sat his tall body down upon it.

"So, tell me," Jacob started, his eyes wild with excitement, "what do you want in a *wedding cake*?" (The words *wedding cake* came out of his mouth like a whisper.) "You can have *anything*."

"Well, um, I don't know," Amanda said hesitantly. "I hadn't really thought about it yet."

"Yet? You hadn't thought about it *yef*? But there is only a month until your wedding you said!" As Jacob spoke he began pulling a little at his greasy hair.

"Yes, it is," said Amanda a little embarrassed now at her unpreparedness. "But we are hoping for a simple wedding, with not too much fuss" (at this Jacob nearly fell off of his seat) "so we didn't really think...".

"That is precisely the issue!" cried Jacob, his voice rising in both pitch and volume. "You didn't think at all did you?" Amanda was seriously starting to doubt if picking the little cake shop as the place to wait and be found was really such a good idea at all. She began nervously looking around, trying to figure a way to politely escape the conversation when Jacob's face suddenly softened, and he continued: "Well we'll get you on track right away, that's for sure. Don't you worry one bit!" Amanda decided that telling Jacob that she had not been a bit worried before stepping into the shop would be impolite, so she smiled and nodded slightly, hoping that someone would find her soon.

"Now," Jacob said in a voice that was slightly less shrill, "let's taste some cake, shall we?"

On the silver tray before her, Amanda looked over the most beautiful cakes she had ever seen. Each one was frosted in the same shade of pearl white icing, and each had a different type of delicate flower (made entirely of sugar to Amanda's delight) placed on top of the cake, at the exact centre. A breath of anticipation escaped from Amanda's lips. Her right hand reached out slowly to touch the icing on one of the cakes, and was smacked sharply by Jacob.

"Miss, you mustn't offend the cakes by poking at them," Jacob said in a hushed tone, "you must savour them gently. Here, use this." As he spoke he produced a small silver fork from his pocket and handed it across the table to Amanda. Amanda took the fork reverently, nodded a thank you at Jacob, and eagerly (but as slowly as she could) cut into the little cake with the yellow sugar sunflower on top. As she raised the fork to her lips her nose was tickled as if by dancing Chiquita bananas and she smiled wildly as she popped the cake into her mouth. The smoothest of dark chocolates slid down her tongue, followed by a wonderfully delicious parade of those dancing bananas, all wearing tiny sugar shoes with Tahitian vanilla beans soles.

"Oh," cried Amanda "its Chocolate Banana cake! It's wondrous!"

"And made with all natural, fair trade, and organic ingredients" Jacob added. "Try this one next," he said pointing to the cake with a tiny yellow daisy on top, "it's fantastic!"

Amanda more confidently plunged her fork into the side of the tiny cake and raised the fork to her lips. In an instant her whole face puckered in delight, for it was the most flavourful and lovely lemon cake she had ever tasted.

"Jacob," she said, "it really *is* fantastic!" As she thrust her fork into the third tiny cake, the one with the sugar tiger lily on top, she began to feel a little queer. She suddenly became aware of the sleeves of her shirt and that they had become quite tight. But, by the time she had raised the silver fork to her lips she was much too focused on her next bite of cake to think anything about it at all. This bite tickled the roof of her mouth with spice, and crunched on her teeth like carrots.

"Oh no!" she thought to herself, "I hate carrot cake!" But before she could even think of trying to swallow the cake without tasting it, she tasted it, and loved it!

"Oh this is marvelous as well Jacob!" she exclaimed. "And I usually don't like carrot cake one bit!"

"Well our cakes," Jacob said proudly, "are all very much worth eating because they are made with only the finest authentic ingredients. As Jacob spoke, Amanda thought that he had gotten quite a bit smaller since she had come in, and that the chairs were much too small for either of them. But there were still four types of cake on the shiny tray in front of her so she didn't give it too much thought.

"What is this one I wonder?" Amanda said cheerfully as she took a piece of the tiny cake with the pink tulip on top. She was delighted to find upon her fork there were perfectly ripe little strawberries squished between lovely layers of golden cake, and that when she put the cake into her mouth it tasted as though she had picked the strawberries only a moment before and dipped them in wonderfully fresh heavy cream. Her belt was much tighter than she remembered it being that morning. No matter, the strawberries were delightful!

The next two pieces she ate very quickly, for she found that she was having a difficult time holding onto the fork in her large hands, and that the pieces were just not large enough for her mouth anymore. The first cake she tried, which had a pretty little bluebell on top, tasted like the smoothest, warmest cappuccino her Nonna had ever made her (with just a hint of liquor). And the second, the one topped with the reddest of red roses, was the most sultry and wonderful chocolate fudge cake she had ever set her tongue on. As she licked the last crumb of the fudge cake off of her satisfied lips, she noticed that she was now taller than poor Jacob (who was looking quite nervous indeed.)

"Oh dear!" Amanda cried, very frightened and quite unaccustomed to her new girth. "What in heaven's name has happened to me?" She found that her legs were now so long that she could balance the tiny lime green table and everything upon it on her knees. Her arms, set loosely at her side, brushed the floor.

"Keep calm please!" Jacob said with an air of authority that he had not had before. "Miss, have you ever had cake from our little shop before?"

"No!" Amanda shouted, becoming increasingly upset.

"Well that explains it. I should have asked you earlier, but you just looked so eager to try our cakes that I thought you had already had and knew how wonderful they are." Jacob said gravely. Very seriously, with his head bobbing slowly he explained, "Our cakes, they are so good, so full of natural and organic ingredients that they tend to have a rather unnatural effect on those who haven't eaten them before. Especially on those who eat a lot of food that is not as 'natural'. Like regular chocolate bars for instance." At this Amanda blushed brightly, for she did eat a lot of chocolate bars and all manner of other foods that were not at all "natural". She was really trying to maintain a healthy diet, but sometimes she just found it all so confusing and difficult.

"But don't you worry, miss," Jacob continued cheerfully, noting the dismay on Amanda's face, "the increase in size is only temporary, and we have a lovely Low Fat Traditional White Cake that is specifically formulated to reverse the effects of our richer flavoured cakes immediately. Here, try this one."

"Oh, I love Traditional White Cake," Amanda said, her voice quivering slightly. "But what if it doesn't work? How am I to buy new shoes with feet the size of flattened watermelons?" Doubtfully, she put her fork into the last cake, the one with a perfect white lily on top, took a piece of the surprisingly white and fluffy Traditional White Cake and guided the sparkling fork into her mouth. As she chewed the soft, moist, and astonishingly rich cake her clothes began to feel a little less tight, and Jacob began to look a little bit bigger. However, as she swallowed the last bit of cake in her mouth, her stomach began to feel smaller as well. So small in fact that she found she could not stand to eat another bite of cake. Since she was back to a size that was somewhat respectable (and manageable to some degree) she tucked a piece of the Low Fat Traditional White

Cake into her purse and resolved to finish the rest later when she had a little more room in her very satisfied tummy.

"Jacob," Amanda asked, "may I take some samples home to my fiancé so that he may try them too?"

"Who?" Jacob said with a puzzled look.

"My fiancé, Kyle," Amanda explained patiently. "I'm sure he would love to see, or taste rather, what our wedding cake options are."

"Why?" Jacob asked, his brow furrowing into a series of wrinkled lines of skin. "What does your fiancé have to do with anything?"

"I don't think I understand your question." Amanda said, thoroughly confused.

"You, miss," Jacob began, now quite annoyed, "are the bride. Why on earth does your fiancé matter?"

"Um, uh, hm," Amanda stuttered, "I am marrying him. He matters quite a lot actually."

"Well of course he's matter!" Jacob said, quite offended at Amanda's underestimation of his grasp of basic physics. "But *what* does *he* have to do with what kind of wedding cake *you* want."

"Well," Amanda tried to explain, "it is *our* wedding."

"No its not." Jacob shot back.

"Yes it is." Amanda returned.

"*NO*, it is not."

Amanda stared for a moment, unable to think of a response that would lead her out of this very cyclical conversation. After a moment, she began again, "Okay Jacob, then perhaps I can take a few samples home so that I have an opportunity to taste them again and make a better decision?"

"No," Jacob said definitely. "You must try the samples here."

"But why?" Amanda asked.

"Because I said so," Jacob answered in an annoying voice, quite like that of a spoiled five year old. Utterly frustrated and completely exhausted, Amanda decided not to argue any further, just happy that Jacob hadn't seen her slip the piece of cake into her purse moments before. She thought she might just bring Kyle with her the next time she decided to venture into the little shop. She made a little mental note (which was promptly misfiled as her poor brain had been dealing with an extraordinary influx of mental notes lately) to make an appointment with someone other than Jacob to sample wedding cakes, because while he was a nice enough young man, he was turning out to be a real pain in the arse.

With a couple of polite thank you's, Amanda quickly finished her tea, picked up her purse (carefully so as not to squash the Low Fat Traditional White Cake tucked inside) and bid Jacob a good day. She ducked her head slightly to step her large frame (but not so large as to be unsightly, just the kind of large that makes people think "my, that girl is tall" as they walk by) through the door of the little shop and ambled into the sunlight on the street.

\* \* \*

### The Mock Minister

Quite unsettled by the strange events in the cake shop and still a little awkward on her large feet, Amanda looked up and down the busy afternoon sidewalk in search of the little white

dove. "What on earth," she thought to herself (out loud as usual), "should I do now? How I do wish I knew where I was. Or am. Either of the two would be delightful." Traveling quickly on the heels of her last thought, Amanda was hit smack in the forehead with another. She realized that she had been focusing so much attention on where she was, that she had not thought about where she was going, which could turn out to be the easier of the two conditions to decipher. So, she stood and thought about what else she had to do. And she thought. And she stood.

Suddenly, she remembered that she had a mid-afternoon appointment with the minister that was to perform the wedding service for Kyle and her. Kyle would certainly be waiting for her at the meeting; he must have assumed that they were to meet there. And then she would be found twice over, once on her own and once on account of good scheduling.

Out of her pocket she pulled a little slip of paper, upon which she had written several very important addresses and phone numbers. "Now," thought Amanda (still aloud), "which address is it? I know it was on a hill somewhere. Perhaps in a little wood? Oh dear, think. Come on brain, remember please." Amanda gently massaged her forehead with her fingertips (as she had always thought that if a little massage could help a pitcher keep his arm warm, then it might just help her overworked brain get warmed up too.)

So she stood on the busy sidewalk, thinking. She thought and thought and thought, but no answer came. She tried giving her forehead a good couple of smacks and a little shake but to no avail. "Oh me!" Amanda cried. "Why can't I remember where her house in the forest and on the hill is?" With that she stopped and laughed with glee. "Why of course!" She said excitedly. "42 Briar Hill Road, in *Forest Hill*." The moment the address escaped her lips she stepped towards the road, lifted her hand into the air, and flagged a cab. "42 Briar Hill Road!" she told the driver excitedly. In just a few moments they arrived in front of a large brown brick house. Amanda paid the driver, was out of the cab and up the driveway in a flash. She checked the number on the house, just to be sure, and rang the bell.

The door was opened by a short, stout older woman, dressed entirely in beige and looking a little frazzled. She looked at Amanda questioningly but didn't say a word.

"Hello," Amanda started, "my name is Amanda. I have an appointment with you to talk about our wedding this afternoon."

"I don't remember you asking me to marry you, and I am certain that we are not getting married this afternoon. I am playing a friendly game of croquet with my friend the duchess at four," the woman said puzzled.

"Oh no, I'm sorry," Amanda tried to explain, "I have an appointment with you this afternoon, and you have agreed to marry Kyle and I in about a month. In May. Remember, you've already cashed our deposit cheque?"

"Well that makes quite a bit more sense, dear," the woman said stepping away from the door. "Do come in. My, you are much taller than I expected."

"Oh no," Amanda began, "I'm not usually this tall, I just ate some wonderfully rich cake earlier." Seeing the woman's face cloud over with confusion she realized how nonsensical her explanation sounded and added quickly: "It's a long story." When the woman didn't pursue it any further, Amanda smiled thankfully and stepped into the cool brick house.

The short woman led Amanda into a small sitting room. By the front window sat a large piano, covered in papers and family pictures. Also in the small room were two couches, three very well worn chairs, an ottoman, two bookshelves, and a writing desk. It appeared as if everything in the room had come to be in the house independently, for there was not one piece of furniture that was the same colour.



The woman sat down upon a chair upholstered in a faded red flower pattern. "So," she started, "when is your wedding?"

"May 26, and we are holding it in my mom's backyard," Amanda answered, and then continued, "I'm sorry, but shouldn't we wait for my fiancé?"

"What for?" the woman asked, puzzled.

"Because he is going to be a large part of the ceremony," Amanda responded, feeling as though she had had this conversation before.

"Not really," the woman concluded. "You'll simply decide what needs to be done today, and you can let him know later." She shifted in her seat, reached behind the chair and produced a faded yellow folder. Before Amanda had an opportunity to comment any further, the woman began speaking in a slow and aged voice, "Marriage is a sacred institution, one into which two people should only enter if they intend to honour and love each other until the end of time." As she spoke, Amanda nodded, wondering where Kyle was. The woman continued, "I have performed nearly one hundred wedding ceremonies, and I think that it will help you to decide what you want for your own if I describe some of them to you." Hoping to buy some time for her tardy fiancé, Amanda smiled an encouraging smile and nodded at the woman so she would continue.

"The first ceremony I ever performed," the minister continued, "took place in 1963, in a field just north of Toronto. The couple was madly in love, and wed in front of their parents and their seventeen dogs."

"The parents had seventeen dogs?" Amanda asked amazed.

"No the couple had seventeen dogs," the minister replied.

"Where did they keep them all?" Amanda asked. "Were they living together already?"

"No," the minister said, her eyes beginning to flutter in what looked like exasperation. "The seventeen dogs were a wedding gift from the parents." Having much more to ask, but deciding it better just to let the topic rest, Amanda nodded politely, encouraging the minister to continue. "The second wedding ceremony I presided over," the minister went on, "took place at a small church on the Danforth, in the presence of nearly one hundred people. Now the third wedding ceremony I performed took place in a restaurant on the waterfront that no longer exists. The fourth ceremony I performed took place in the same church as the second, and so were the twentieth and thirty-second ceremonies."

Sensing where this conversation was going, Amanda quickly asked the minister, "So, how did you become a minister?"

Both unknowingly and unwittingly Amanda had embarked on the longest conversational journey she ever been on. The minister started by telling Amanda that she wasn't really a minister, but a *Humanist*, and that those were very different things. A minister had a specific faith that he or she performed ceremonies for, usually with a church, and often with a following, but a *Humanist* did not subscribe to any specific faith, but is nonetheless permitted, by the government no less, to perform said ceremonies, and to incorporate any faith that suited those requesting the ceremony.

It was at about this point in the conversation that Amanda lost interest in what the minister – or perhaps it was mock-minister - was saying and began looking around the little room, distracted by all of the interesting things that lived there. On every available surface were all sorts of family pictures, porcelain ladies in pastel dresses, and half dead plants in clay pots. Amanda began making up little life stories for each of these things inside her head to keep her from appearing bored.

By the time the mock-minister had finished explaining how she had become a *Humanist* minister, described all of the nearly one hundred wedding ceremonies that she had preformed, and gone lightly over the details for Amanda and Kyle's wedding, Amanda was getting very hungry, and

found herself quite annoyed at Kyle for leaving her alone at the meeting. When the mock-minister asked if she had any questions, Amanda quickly shook her head and stood up, edging slowly towards the front door. The mock-minister stood as well and walked Amanda to the door, chatting the entire time. As fast and politely as she could, Amanda thanked her for her time, and bounded out the door.

\* \* \* \*

### An Uninvited Guest

As soon as she had stepped out the front door of the mock-minister's house, Amanda heard a familiar cooing sound.

"Little dove!" Amanda called excitedly. "Little dove, where are you?" Within a moment she had located the sound, and was walking hurriedly in the direction of the cooing. As she rounded the street corner, Amanda spied the dove with the little blue bow tie, waddling its way down the street happily. Amanda followed, around this corner, then the next, surprised at how quickly the little dove's little legs could carry it.

Tired and quite out of breath, Amanda walked up the driveway toward a large house into which the dove with the little blue bow tie had hopped. Once on the front lawn, Amanda noticed that the house looked oddly like her mother's, but more importantly, that there were the wonderful cooking smells wafting out through the open front door. Oh how hungry she was, so hungry that she almost broke into a run as she neared the house. Just as she was reaching the front door, a man waving his arms ran right into her, knocking her to the ground.

"Well, *who* are you?" The man asked, no longer running but still waving his arms about.

"Hello sir," Amanda replied. "My name is Amanda. I was following a white dove wearing a blue bow tie. Have you seen him pass through?"

The man shook his head and said gravely "No ma'am. But if he does pass through, he better have an invitation. This event is invitation only! Just close friends and likable relatives, I'm afraid." As he spoke, Amanda noticed the flurry of activity that had overtaken the front yard. There were men all over the place: big men, small men, young and old, all running around waving their arms about, cleaning or carrying or mowing or planting. There seemed to be no real order, but there was an awful lot of work being done.

"What type of event is it?" Amanda asked, turning her nose up into the air to smell the warm food more fully.

"Why it's a wedding!" the man replied, looking like he might break into a run at any second. "It's the Di Battista – Brandt wedding, and it's starting soon."

"But that's *my* wedding," Amanda started, shocked. "I'm Amanda Di Battista. I thought this looked an awful lot like my mum's house."

"Well congratulations, my girl," the man shouted, jumping up and down now. Suddenly he stopped and became very still, asking in a very serious and intimidating voice, "May I see you invitation, please?"

"My invitation?" Amanda stammered, "Well, I don't have one."

"Well I'm sorry, my girl," the man said, starting to walk away. "I can't let you in if you don't have an invitation."

"But I'm the one getting married!" cried Amanda. "I sent out the invitations! I didn't send one to myself!" Noticing that she was becoming increasingly agitated and suddenly aware that she

was much bigger than him, the man took two large steps backwards and found himself in the middle of a flowerbed that had just been watered. He quickly jumped back onto the driveway, and another man came and fixed the mess he had made.

"Well," the man started, looking around nervously. "I'll have to ask the Queen." With that he turned and ran towards the backyard, leaving Amanda standing on the driveway. She stood for a few minutes and deciding that the little man was not coming back, began inching her way toward the front door, trying to go in unnoticed. As Amanda got close to the door, the man came running back into the front yard, yelling as he got closer to her "The Queen says you're invited! Go on in!" He continued straight past her and made his way quickly back onto the lawn, where he went right back to working and waving his arms about.

Amanda shook her head, confused, and walked up to the house.

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### An Army of Aunts

As she opened the front door (through which she had to squeeze her too large body), she heard a curious noise coming from the kitchen. It was a noise quite like a colony of bees might make, except instead of coming from the beating of tiny wings, the buzzing sounded like the chatter of a thousand busy women.

Presently she poked her large head around the corner so that just one of her oversized eyes could glimpse into the kitchen, and lo and behold the great sound *was* the chattering of nearly a thousand women! These women were unlike any Amanda had seen before, for they had heads just like the ones on the women she knew, but they were perched atop the small reddish brown bodies of ants. The ant women were scurrying about so quickly that Amanda could hardly make sense out of the commotion let alone get a head count.

In and out of the kitchen they ran: into the garden, back into the kitchen, into the pantry, back into the garden. Some carried brown mushrooms out into the garden, and others carried sparkling clean mushrooms back into the kitchen where still others chopped, seasoned and mixed those very same fungi. Peering just a bit more around the corner Amanda was able to make out a large oven, a warm burst of air tickled her cheeks. It smelled like mushroom, and onion, and cream cheese, and rosemary, and fresh pepper, and golden brown puff pastry all at once! Steam was rising off the top of the oven, and a mountainous pile of steaming hot bite-sized golden brown (her nose had been right) puff pastry appetizers were cooling on the counter.

Oh how she wanted to taste one, but she knew that if she came upon the little ant women in her current state she would surely frighten them. So, she quietly removed the small piece of Traditional Low Fat White Cake she had tucked into her purse and took a bite. "Well I hope that wasn't too big a bite! Or I shall shrink down to nothing, or have no room left for one of those savory pastries! Either would be terrible."

Slowly her squashed toes felt much more comfortable as her shoes became the right size for her feet once again, and her body returned to its regular height. Once she was sure that she was not going to shrink anymore, Amanda poked her head around the corner of the kitchen and slowly approached the working women.

"What is that you are making?" asked Amanda softly. "It smells wonderful. Do you think that I could try just a bit?" All of the women stopped what they were doing, stood very still, and looked at Amanda startled. "Oh dear," Amanda continued quickly, "I didn't mean to interrupt, its just

that everything smells so good, and I do love puff pastry so. You've all been buzzing about so efficiently, and I've never seen, um, woman-ants before." At this one of the ants (who was wearing a little black and white striped apron) huffed and said crossly "We are *not* woman-ants, whatever in heavens those are! We are army-Aunts. We've come to help prepare for the wedding. And *you*, miss, are late!"

"Late for what?" Amanda asked puzzled. The Army-Aunts gasped and stared at her in amazement. Amanda could tell by their little faces that she had said something very wrong, but could not for the life of her figure out what.

"Why, *your* wedding my dear!" quipped one of the Aunts standing by the sink chopping mushrooms.

"But I'm not getting married until May." Amanda replied, now more confused than ever. "You are all very early!"

"Honey," the Aunt wearing the striped apron started, "it *is* May. Your wedding is today." Amanda let out a snort of laughter, and quickly put her hand in front of her mouth. It couldn't be May, she thought (managing to keep the thought in her own head this time.) It had been April earlier this morning, and March the week before. She had lots of time before the wedding, and besides, she couldn't very well get married without Kyle! As this thought fluttered behind her eyelids, she caught a glimpse of Kyle from behind the kitchen window. He appeared to be caught in the race that was continuing outside of the house, and he seemed to be well acquainted with all of the men flapping their arms and running with him. As he passed the kitchen window a second time he gave Amanda a little wink and a cheerful wave and continued on his way.

Amanda was mystified, but before she could ask how her fiancé had managed to get to the house before and without her, she was being shuffled towards the screen door by the army-Aunts. Out onto the deck they went, and she was presented to a very regal looking Aunt wearing a blue shawl and sitting at a table with four other Aunts who were cleaning mushrooms furiously. The Aunt (who Amanda assumed to be the queen of the Aunts) was presiding over the chaotic scene before her, shouting directions at the men running about the backyard, and giggling with the other women at the table. She seemed to be maintaining an order both inside and out of the house from the table on the deck easily, as her army-Aunts whipped up the biggest spread Amanda had ever seen, and the men running about were transforming the yard into the prettiest on the street.

"Your Highness," the Aunt with the striped apron began, "*she* is finally here." The Aunt pushed Amanda forward so that she stumbled then stood in front of the queen. At a loss for words, Amanda waited for the Queen to speak first.

"Do you play croquet?" the Queen asked.

"Um, no, not really," Amanda began, "but I guess I could learn."

"It was a joke, my dear!" the Queen said quickly (Amanda didn't get it). "Where on earth have you been?"

"Well, I couldn't really tell you Your Highness," Amanda replied, "today has been so very out of the ordinary that I wouldn't even know where to begin."

"Well what on earth does *that* mean?" the Queen demanded. "Explain yourself girl!"

"But you see ma'am," Amanda began, but the Queen quickly stopped her short,

"No, I don't!" It was clear that Amanda was going to have to try another approach.

"I am very sorry, your Highness, I must just have wedding jitters."

"Well *that* explains it my dear!" Amanda thought to herself that it certainly did not but the Queen continued: "We can take care of that. PLACES!" As the singsong word came out of the Queen's mouth all of the army-Aunts and all of the men flapping around the backyard began running faster around the backyard. To Amanda's surprise they produced a champagne flute for

each person and several bottles of the exact Prosecco that Amanda had been thinking of choosing for her wedding day. The bottles were perfectly chilled and quickly poured out into each glass.

"A toast!" The Queen yelled.

"Rye or whole wheat?" asked one of the Aunts in a hushed voice, producing two bags of sliced bread from nowhere.

"Not *that* kind of toast," the Queen said rolling her eyes. "Who wants to make the first toast?"

"I will," said a man's voice from within the excited crowd that had gathered jittering in the backyard. "I propose a toast!" The man lifted his glass (to which the crowd cheered): "to my beautiful bride-to-be." As Kyle stepped forward from the crowd, holding his glass in the air, the Queen let out a gasp of horror.

"To my love! Cheers!" Kyle finished, winked at Amanda and drank his Prosecco to the sound of clinking glasses and cheering guests. But before Amanda had a chance to touch her tongue to the bubbling golden liquid, the Queen shouted in a panicked shrill voice, "Bad Luck! Ladies!" In a flash the army-Aunts whisked Amanda into the house and up the stairs. As she tried to wriggle free of the tiny, but surprisingly strong arms of the Aunts, she cried, "What is going on? What's the matter? Where's my drink?" None of the Aunts offered an answer to any of her questions; they simply looked at her sympathetically and opened the door to the room at the top of the stairs. "Oh dear god," Amanda thought with sudden panic, "they think that I've gone mad, and are locking me away!" With a sudden surge of strength (brought on from her rising panic), Amanda kicked free of the Aunts, and flew back down the stairs. At the bottom, she stopped, for there stood the Queen, hands on her hips, a look of determination in her eyes.

"Amanda Michelle Di Battista," the Queen said, causing Amanda to shake visibly, "you get your late bottom up those stairs right now and get ready for your wedding!" Amanda responded a weak "Yes ma'am," and hurried up the stair where the army-Aunts was waiting.

\* \* \* \* \*

### The Dress

When she entered the room the army-Aunts filed out, one by one. Once alone, Amanda wondered at what she was to do next. Suddenly, she heard the sound of running water and steam came billowing out from around the opposite corner of the bedroom. Being ever curious, Amanda slowly walked around the corner and discovered a little bathroom hidden there. As she poked her head into the bathroom a small woman with perfect hair came running out, smacked right into Amanda, and they both fell to the floor in a heap.

"Well," stared the small woman, "it is awfully rude to come into a room uninvited and unannounced!" The woman picked herself up off the floor and smoothed her pretty blue dress.

"Oh, I am very sorry," Amanda said, "I was just exploring and was so very relieved to find something that I recognized. My, what a hot shower you are having."

"The hot shower *you* are having," the woman corrected. "Now get in there, everyone will be waiting for you, and we have so much to do yet!" As the little woman spoke she began tugging at Amanda's clothes and pushing her towards the bathtub. Having very little energy left to argue, Amanda said to the woman, "Thank you miss, but I can undress myself." As she noticed the skeptical look on the woman's face she continued, "I promise, I won't be long." And with that the

woman twirled around so that her skirt came up above her knees and fluttered in the air, left the room and closed the bathroom door behind her.

Now, Amanda was very excited to have a moment to herself, and even more excited to find that there was a glass of Prosecco on the counter in a tall crystal glass, engraved with the words "Drink Me." Knowing that the little woman in the blue dress would be back shortly she resolved to have a little sip after she got out of the hot shower, finished taking off her clothes and jumped into the stream of hot water.

She was halfway done shampooing her hair when she heard the bathroom door fling open, and the little woman's voice shouting "Shower's done! New task! Move along!" Amanda wildly tried to get the shampoo out of her hair, but before she had finished the little woman in the blue dress had turned off the water, ripped open the shower curtain and thrust a towel in Amanda's direction.

"I'm not looking! Get out!" Shouted the woman. Amanda took the towel being shoved at her, dried herself as best she could before she was pulled out of the tub and back into the bedroom and through a little door she hadn't noticed before. "New task, new task!" shouted the woman, "get dressed!" Amanda wondered what she was supposed to wear, but as she looked around the closet packed with clothes, a thin arm thrust itself through the slightly open door holding a pair of giant flesh colored underwear and a bra with no straps. As Amanda took the hideous undergarments, the arm pulled away sharply. It was immediately thrust through the doorway again, this time with a brand new, very cold glass of Prosecco pressed between its fingers. Amanda happily took the glass, but quickly put it on the floor beside her as the little woman's voice came through the door loudly "Put those on, and hurry!"

Amanda looked at the underwear in dismay. Never before had she seen such a huge expanse of flesh colored spandex. Turning it over, she tried desperately to find the front, but was horrified to find a hole in the crotch so large that her entire arm could slip through easily. Closing her eyes she pulled the monstrosity over her legs, but found that they got stuck at her knees. Jumping up and down in an attempt to get the long legged underwear on before the little woman came back, Amanda found herself even more stuck than before. She sat down in frustration, and began to cry.

"What are you doing in there?" The little woman in the blue dress called.

"N-n-n-noooooothing!" Amanda sobbed. She wrapped the towel around her still wet, and now very cold and awfully tangled body and waited for the door to open. Much to her surprise, the door opened only a little and the arm thrust itself in again, this time holding a smaller, more manageable looking pair of flesh colored underwear.

"Here, try these," said the woman's voice a little more sympathetically. "I didn't think you would like the other ones. Also maybe try a sip of your Prosecco." Amanda wiped the tears off of her hot cheeks, took the new and much nicer pair of underwear, and was patted on her shoulder reassuringly by the hand. As she untangled the enormous underwear from around her legs and slipped on the other, (much more comfortable) ones, and was reaching for her glass of Prosecco, the voice called from the other side of the door, "But HURRY!" so she quickly put down her glass and picked up the bra. Having never worn a bra with no straps before, she was utterly confused, so called to the little woman in the blue dress who was undoubtedly standing outside the closet door.

"Miss," Amanda said tentatively, "um, how does the bra work?"

"That bra is just like a regular bra, but without straps!" The small woman returned. Amanda made a face, of *course* she knew that, but what she didn't understand was *how* it worked just like a regular bra if it lacked the straps to prevent it from falling to the floor. So, standing in the little closet she decided to pretend simply that the bra had straps, and hope for the best. Taking the undergarment in her hands, she placed the cups upside down on her back, did up the clasp in front

of her, then flipped the bra over expertly and slid it around on her frame so that all was lined up. Once she had the cups adjusted properly she tried jumping up and down a little, and to her amazement, the bra stayed exactly where it was. Everything was so odd today that even gravity was acting strangely. She wondered to herself if anything would ever be ordinary again. With an exasperated sigh she reached for her glass, and just as she did, the closet door flew open and in came the woman in the blue dress. Amanda reeled as the woman pulled her by the wrist back out into the bedroom shouting, "Move on, move on! New task!"

"What now?" Amanda asked nervously.

"Hair my dear, your hair is a mess!" The woman asked, "Would you like more Prosecco?"

"I haven't had any yet!" Amanda cried, "I haven't had a chance! How can I possibly have more?"

"Well you certainly can't have less," said a voice from the other side of the room. Amanda turned around and saw another woman, this one in a yellow dress, standing in the room with them. She hadn't been there before, but was standing as if she always had been, pouring herself a glass of sparkling wine.

"She is quite right you know," commented blue dress holding out her glass for the yellow dress to fill for her. "If you haven't had any, you can really only have more." At this both women clinked their glasses together and poured the Prosecco into their mouths. Presently, blue dress focused again on Amanda and said, "We must do your hair! The Queen and all of the guests will be waiting."

Amanda started to go back into the closet for her still very full and very cold glass of wine, but was quickly stopped by blue dress who grabbed her shoulders and steered her back into the bathroom. From under the counter she pulled a large assortment of hair products, all which smelled oddly like coconut, and began spraying and massaging and styling all at once. All the while, yellow dress stood in the doorway nodding her head in approval. Blue dress reached under the counter once more and produced the largest most oddly shaped and dangerous looking hair dryer, plugged it in, and went to work once more on Amanda's hair. After a few moments, the whirr of the hairdryer stopped, "Curling Iron! Stat!" Blue dress shouted at yellow dress, who turned immediately and ran out of the bathroom, through the bedroom and into the hallway. In less than ten seconds she returned, panting, and handed blue dress a giant red curling iron. Blue dress plugged it in and went to work on Amanda's already very hot head.

Within a few moments, the two women looked at each other over Amanda's head, nodded, and yelled "New task, new task! Move on, move on! Makeup!" With that they collected all of the things on the counter, threw them back underneath and pulled Amanda back into the bedroom. Noticing that she had left her glass in the bathroom, yellow dress asked "My dear, don't you like Prosecco?"

"I like it very much indeed!" Amanda responded, "but I still have not had any at all!"

"You've *had* plenty," countered blue dress as she pulled a demonic assortment of items from her large purse. "You just haven't drunk any yet." As blue dress finished arranging all of her things on the floor, yellow dress grabbed Amanda by the shoulders, guided her to the carpet in front of the other woman, and plopped her down. She handed Amanda a brand new sparkling glass, poured more Prosecco into it and sat on the floor beside her.

As Amanda was bringing the glass to her lips, blue dress whipped out her tinted moisturizer and went to work on Amanda's face. Unable to drink for the hand rubbing her cheeks, Amanda sadly placed the glass on the floor beside her and resolved to drink it as soon as she had a chance.

While blue dress applied all manner of pigments and powders to Amanda's face, yellow dress took pictures randomly and chatted about what a wonderful day it was going to be. In particular she chatted about the feast that the Aunts were cooking up in the kitchen downstairs.

In the middle of a lengthy description of the "Tuscan Table" (a table that had been set with all manner of foods from Tuscany – or so she claimed) yellow dress stopped suddenly and shouted "New task, new task! Move on! The DRESS!"

Blue dress took an extended look at the work she had done on Amanda's face, applied a touch more blush, nodded her approval, and jumped up quickly, pulling Amanda to her feet as she went. Yellow dress had scurried back into the closet as blue dress pulled Amanda in front of the mirror to inspect her new face (without her glass of wine, to her dismay.) As Amanda nodded her approval at her own reflection in the mirror (to her surprise she actually looked not only normal but quite pretty) yellow dress appeared from inside the closet carrying the softest looking ivory coloured dress Amanda had ever laid her eyes on. "Oh," she cried in delight, "is that my dress?"

"Made just for you," the women said in unison. Amanda smiled brightly, accepted yet another glass of Prosecco from blue dress, put it down on the dresser and took the ivory dress in her hands. Hurriedly, she slipped the dress over her head, adjusted the bust-line along her (now very secure) strapless bra, and presented her back zipper to be done up by one of the women waiting to help her.

When she turned to look at her reflection in the mirror, she was surprised to see several of the army-Aunts (including the Queen) smiling at her from the bedroom door. For a moment nobody said a word, then suddenly the Queen yelled "PLACES!" and the army Aunts, yellow dress, and blue dress began running about the room frantically, putting the last touches of jewelry onto Amanda, cleaning up, then scurrying out of the bedroom.

The Queen grabbed Amanda by the wrist, and ran down the stairs toward the backyard. In the kitchen, the Aunt wearing the black and white striped apron asked politely,

"Would you like a glass of Prosecco?"

"A glass of Prosecco indeed!" Amanda replied, irritated, as she was shoved through a set of glass doors and into the backyard which was full of people.

\* \* \* \* \*

### The Doves that Wouldn't Fly

Amanda hurried down the aisle towards Kyle who was standing beside the Mock Minister looking very queer indeed. Even though the sun was blaring, Kyle had a black jacket and pants on, all done up so tight that Amanda wondered if he had lost his shorts sometime in the afternoon and had to borrow someone else's clothes.

When she had finally reached her very sweaty fiancé Amanda started excitedly, "Kyle! You'll never guess..." and was immediately shushed by the Mock Minister (who was looking very much like a turtle in her cream colored turtleneck, long greenish jacket and matching pants.)

"Dearly beloved," the Mock Minister cried, "we are gathered here today to honour the love between this man and this woman. Marriage is a sacred union, a blessed institution..."

At about this point, Amanda became very bored and she started to have the feeling that she had heard this speech before. Presently she began looking around at the people gathered about. Everyone was wearing entirely inappropriate clothing for the backyard: most of the women were wearing shoes that poked holes in the grass and all the men looked very hot.



The Mock Minister's voice broke through her thoughts (Amanda sensed that they were directed towards her): "...and we shall start the ceremony with a kiss."

"We shall not!" Amanda cried. "Vows first, kiss after! *That* is the proper order of things!"

"No my dear," the Mock Minister said impatiently, "The kiss comes before the vows. We talked about this in our meeting."

"We did no such thing!" Amanda said defensively, but began to doubt herself as she remembered how little she had paid attention during her meeting with the Mock Minister. (There were just too many things to distract her in that odd little house!)

Amanda looked from the Mock Minister to Kyle, who (always ready for a kiss) smiled and shrugged, and before she could say another word Kyle moved toward her and planted a big wet one square on her lips. The crowd gathered before them cheered, as Amanda swiftly punched Kyle in the gut and pulled away.

"Now," said the Mock Minister, "for the vows. Kyle, repeat after me. I take you Amanda,"

"(I take you Amanda)"

"To be my knife,"

"(To be my knife)"

Amanda's face wrinkled in confusion. She was sure those words weren't quite right. She made a move to interrupt, but the Queen shot her a look that made her hold her tongue.

"To stab and to carve," The Mock Minister continued,

"(To stab and to carve)" (Kyle repeated.)

"For slicing and for laceration,"

"(For slicing and for laceration)"

"In sharpness and when dull,"

"(In sharpness and when dull)"

"Until dismemberment do us part."

"(Until dismemberment do us part.)"

"You may kiss the bride!" the Mock Minister cried. Before Amanda could object that she had not said her vows Kyle flung his arms around her and kissed her. As he let her go the Mock Minister shouted "Release the doves!" and two of the improperly dressed guests opened a basket that had been sitting on the grass near a pretty little flower bed. Nothing happened. They looked at each other puzzled, then looked at the Mock Minister.

"Release the DOVES!" she shouted, louder this time. The guests waited. Nothing happened. Amanda and Kyle leaned over and peered into the basket.

"Kyle," whispered Amanda (for fear of the Mock Minister scolding her again), "that's the dove I followed! And look - he has a little friend!" The two doves were sitting as pretty as can be in the picnic basket, and they certainly did not look like they were going anywhere soon. The Mock Minister looked into the basket and shouted, "Doves! You are released!" The two doves looked up at her, annoyed.

The dove with the little blue bow tie cooed, "No, thank you. It's quite comfortable in here you know. Much more comfortable than that cage we stay in. It smells much better too. We like it here."

Amanda watched the Mock Minister's face turn purple as she turned on her heels (or at least that's what Amanda assumed happened for she could not really see her heels under her long flowing pant legs) and stomped towards the house. Once there she yelled "PICTURES!!" at the top of her lungs, turned again and went into the house. Suddenly, all of the guests got up from their seats, took out their cameras and began furiously taking pictures of the newlyweds. The sound of so many cameras clicking at once made Amanda cry out, half in anger and half in fear, as the flash

bulbs blinded her and she lost Kyle in the crowd. She waved her arms about trying to shoo everyone away, and promptly tripped, banging her knees on the grass. As she shifted her weight onto her arm to lift herself from the ground, she found that the grass had turned into the beige fabric that covered her couch. She realized that her head lay in Kyle's lap, with the sun through the window in her eyes and the sound of Kyle turning the pages of his magazine in her ears.

"Sweetie," Kyle said gently, "wake up. You've had such a long sleep. Were you dreaming?"

"Oh yes!" Amanda said sitting up slowly. And she told her fiancé all the details of her dream, as best she could remember them.

"That was a curious dream, dear," said Kyle when Amanda finished. "But it is time for dinner now. Do dumplings sound okay?" Amanda nodded, and Kyle watched as she hurried to get up and check her email before dinner. Kyle sat back on the couch and wondered after his soon-to-be wife's dream. Could a wedding be that strange? Could a marriage be that adventurous? He closed his eyes and half believed himself in the backyard of his fiancée's dream. He knew that it was this sense of wonder and delight that they would look back upon in their coming years, and remember with great happiness the joyfulness of their first days together.

Opening his eyes, he shook the sickeningly sweet thought from his head, suppressed a gag, and laughed at himself for being so sappy. As he got up to start dinner, he heard an odd noise. Looking out the window he saw a little white dove wearing a little blue bow tie sitting on the ledge. "Amanda, come quick!" Kyle called. The dove turned its little head so that he was directly facing Kyle, winked slyly at him, cooed a little coo, and flew off into the warm evening.

### Chapter 3

#### *Wilderness and War* *Reading Joseph Boyden's Three Day Road Ecocritically*

I continue this ecocritical experiment with a piece of scholarly criticism that addresses Canadian writer Joseph Boyden's first novel, Three Day Road. Published in 2005 and nominated for the Governor General's Award in the same year, Three Day Road focuses on the involvement of Native Canadian soldiers in WWI as well as on the experience of colonial violence for the Cree community in northern Ontario. Written at a time of continued conflict throughout North American, particularly in Canada, between Native communities and the Government, Boyden's novel brings to the forefront issues that not only affected Native Canadians in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but which continue to affect these communities into the present day. While I was reading and researching about Three Day Road, negotiations surrounding land claim disputes in Caledonia, Ontario were escalating, gaining significant media coverage. As I complete this paper, over a year later, the negotiations continue in the Caledonia dispute, but media coverage has become virtually nonexistent. Boyden's novel allows readers the opportunity to think about and engage with the issues that touch the daily lives of Native Canadians, but which may not enter into mainstream Canadian media or culture. Boyden challenges his readers to rethink how they themselves are implicated in the formation of the "Canadian" experience, and to consider the consequences of such an experience.

As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, Martha Nussbaum argues that realist fiction provides readers with an opportunity to sympathize with and connect to ethical situations that are presented within the text. Exploring these situations informs the reader's ethical choices outside of that literature, providing them with an opportunity to consider circumstances they may not have previously encountered, from a perspective of detailed and personal understanding. In her

discussion about the construction of the Canadian north as a culturally and politically loaded signifier, Renée Hulan states about realist literature that "literature holds an epistemic value that entails responsibility to 'the real' because the expectations surrounding realism remain strong...To understand texts as both constructed and responsible to the world outside the text is to realize the ethical and political dimensions of the mimetic function" (18). As a work of realist fiction, Three Day Road is an excellent piece of literature from which we can further explore the preceding assertions. Boyden's novel offers us characters to whom we can relate as a result both of their intense humanity and of their placement in the well known military and colonial history of Canada. Boyden urges us to consider the fine line between sanity and madness, the consequences of violence, and the importance of worldview as we value the environment. He also pushes the limits of realist fiction, as storytelling and magic are introduced into the story not only as a part of the plot but also as fundamental to the belief systems of his main characters, challenging our assumption about what is "real." Presenting situations just outside the realm of the traditional manifestation of realism, Boyden encourages readers to be more open to different versions of reality, versions that are very much dependant upon Native Canadian tradition, culture, and religion.

As a Canadian student, I believe that reading our contemporary national literature is extremely important, that literature contributes to the formation of identity as well as personal ethics, and that Canadian literature has something important to say about the experience of being a Canadian. Margaret Atwood focuses specifically on the importance of literature in the formation of a national identity, suggesting that literature can act as a mirror for the reader as a citizen:

The reader looks at the mirror and sees not the writer but himself; and behind his own image in the foreground, a reflection of the world he lives in. If a country or a culture lacks such mirrors it has no way of knowing what it looks like; it must travel blind. (23)

Put another way, Hulan asserts that “[i]n Canadian literary history and criticism, literature has been to culture as culture is to nation. Literature affirms the presence of culture, and culture in turn grants the nation legitimacy” (3). It is important then, that we engage with a literature that is inclusive and representative of what it means to be a Canadian, for the “privileging of the wilderness and nordicity as defining characteristics of Canadian identity not only fails to recognize the lived experiences of the vast majority of Canadians, but also distances Canadian readers from their literature” (Iverson and Edwards 7). The consequences of this distance between Canadian readers and their literature will be a missed opportunity for the development of ethics as well as a lack in the ability of the individual to look into the cultural “mirror,” as Atwood describes it, and recognize themselves or their environment, or their place within that culture. From an ecocritical standpoint, the connection between literature and the formation of a distinctly Canadian culture and identity, illustrates the importance of ecocritical inquiry itself. As ecocriticism explores the relationship between literature and the environment, this type of inquiry is invaluable as we explore how the literature that contributes to the formation of the Canadian national imagination is connected to the very ground of the nation itself. Ecocriticism asks: what is the relationship between the Canadian environment and Canadian literature, and how do these both influence the conception of national identity?

The experience of being a Canadian is one that is intimately linked to environmental experience: the shared Canadian condition of living in so vast a nation so as to render a shared environmental experience impossible on a national level. This link has been made by several scholars, most notably and famously Northrop Frye. In his preface to The Bush Garden, Northrop Frye asserts that “the question of Canadian identity, so far as it affects the creative imagination, is not a ‘Canadian’ question at all, but a regional question” (xxii). Yet further into the book he states that “[i]t is obvious that Canadian literature, whatever its inherent merits, is an

indispensable aid to the knowledge of Canada. It records what the Canadian imagination has reacted to, and tells us things about this environment that nothing else will tell us" (217). The notion that Canadian literature has been largely informed and built upon a "garrison mentality," a community rooted in fear of the "wilderness" that lay beyond its fortified walls, is echoed throughout Frye's work and pervades Margaret Atwood's book Survival. So too is the tendency to view Canada as a colony ("practically the only country left in the world which is a pure colony, colonial in psychology as well as in mercantile economics"), and its literature as a reflection of such a condition (Frye xxiii). More and more, critical literature which addresses Canadian national identity and its connection to the environment challenges the common assertions of the predominant Canadian literary criticism, that the canon of Canadian literature is and should be rooted in the "wilderness" of the North, and that the Canadian experience is epitomized by writing about rural or small town life. Specifically, W.H. New takes issue with the assumption that the land presents something "natural" for Canadian national identity:

While many influential commentators have in the past encapsulated a collective Canadian identity in land-based metaphor – one thinks of the critic Northrop Frye, in The Bush Garden, for example, talking of a "garrison mentality"; or of the politician Alexander Mackenzie and the poet E.J. Pratt, alluding to Sir John A. Macdonald's National Dream as a problem of building a railway across a 'sea of mountains'; or of the historian Donald Creighton, conceptualizing Canada as the offspring of the 'empire of the St. Lawrence – my purpose here is somewhat different, for I do not assume that the land is a "natural" image for a distinctive nation character, or that a national character is by definition fixed. Instead of accepting the land as a concluding image of identity, in consequence, I am interested in why it has so often been accepted as though it were, and what this acceptance implies. (17)

New challenges the assumption that national identity can be found by reading the land as a text itself, and outlines the many terms that describe the Canadian landscape – "The Prairies," "The Canadian Shield" – and explains that none of these terms reveals much about the experience of being Canadian or the Canadian environment. These are not conditions that can be uniformly

experienced or understood (11). For the majority of Canadians then, it is their experience of being largely misrepresented in the canon of Canadian literature (and the corresponding literary criticism) that they share with other Canadians. This results in a lack of connection with such literature, and in turn a lack of connection between an individual's experience of the Canadian environment and the environment presented in Canadian literature. Such literature fails to engage the reader on a personal level, thus failing to provide guidance for the development of ethical behaviour of all kinds, including ethical behaviour towards the environment.

There has been a recent shift in Canadian writing, and writing about Canadian writing, that attempts to provide Canadian readers with a more representative national literature (Iverson and Edwards 8). In their introduction to their collection Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities, Iverson and Edwards focus specifically on the preoccupation with the "Canadian North" as the space of Canadian literature, and aim to bring to the forefront the discussion of the urban in Canadian literature. In particular, they write: "Canadian literature, and critical writing on that literature, can and should be a space in which the implications of the perceived changes resulting from the 'turn to the city' are worked through and Canada's urban crises can be contextualized, examined, and even resolved" (9). Three Day Road is one such piece of literature, as the issues surrounding colonialization and urbanization at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are presented, explored, and reevaluated. Three Day Road is an excellent example of how contemporary Canadian writers are working to challenge this classical conception of Canadian national identity. This shift, in turn, moves our literature into a more dynamic and inclusive representation of what it means/is like to be a Canadian, by the inclusion of world views, voices, and environments that have been historically misrepresented or even silenced. Such a shift also necessitates a reevaluation of ethical behaviour for Canadians, as this literature presents personal and detailed accounts of ethical situations, encouraging further engagement and development of individual ethics.

Boyden offers his readers a way of understanding and interacting with the environment that stands in opposition to a capitalist euroWestern understanding. In their relationship with the various environments that they encounter, Boyden's characters illustrate the difference that culture and worldview make in relationships with the land, providing an opportunity for the reader to reassess her own understanding and treatment of her environment. Reading and beginning to understand the difference in these relationships with the environment from the relationships that characterize our literary canon (predominantly a very "white" north) can help us to reshape our understanding of Canadian national identity in a way that will be not only more inclusive to Canadians, but also a more honest and comprehensive representation of our Nation, one which presents readers with a more dynamic opportunity for personal ethical development.

Three Day Road is also an interesting text for an ecocritic beyond the focus on Canadian national identity. It is a novel in which environmental interactions are central to the plot, and the relationships among the main characters are solidified through shared (and not shared) environmental experience and worldviews. The novel also problematizes the term "wilderness" with the similarities Boyden draws out between the backwoods of northern Ontario and war-torn France. By providing parallels between these two vastly different places, Boyden questions our understanding of the construction of nature as well as the valorization of trench warfare, particularly as these terms relate to the Canadian imagination. Three Day Road also disrupts our understanding of the "wilderness" as an exploitable resource, as the violence and destruction of colonial expansion are laid out before the reader. Boyden's presentation of the racism and religious discrimination toward the Cree community in particular, and the Native Canadian population in general, challenges the reader to consider her own place within a historically racist national discourse, and to reconsider the ethical implications of existing representations of and discussions about Native Canadian communities.



This chapter will explore how the experiences and relationships of Boyden's characters challenge the reader to reconceptualize her understanding of both the Canadian North and trench warfare. As a result of its connection to the environment, national identity as presented in Canadian literature provides an ideal subject for practising ecocritical theory, for as Frye states "everything that is central in Canadian writing seems to be marked by the imminence of the natural world" (qtd. in Ivison and Edwards 13). Whether or not one agrees with Frye it is undeniable that the environment plays an extremely important role in Canadian literature, a role that, while static for a long time, is currently undergoing a transformation. As a piece of writing that is representative of this change, Three Day Road invites an ecocritical reading, offering an opportunity to explore the contemporary fiction that is currently challenging the common ideological statements about "North" and "Nation" in Canadian writing.

Following a short summary of the novel, I will engage in a detailed ecocritical reading of Boyden's text, breaking my arguments into three distinct sections. These sections, while by no means a comprehensive exploration of the text, illustrate how I believe the complex issues in the novel can be most logically and fully addressed. It is my hope that this ecocritical reading will provide readers with an environmental perspective on the text, providing a starting point for the discussion for broader environmental relationships. First I will focus my attention on the environmental description of particular places, in the section *Conflicting? Landscapes*. Here I will discuss Boyden's comparison of the "wilderness" of the northern Ontario bush and the "wildness" of the war torn fields of France. I will also look at how different value systems affect each character's relationship to these places, contrasting traditional indigenous and euroWestern capitalist values<sup>12</sup>. In the second section, I will be exploring Xavier Bird's place in the novel as Boyden's main male character. I will investigate his relationships with his environments, both in the bush and in the trench, as well as his relationships with the other characters in the novel. Xavier

embodies many things in Boyden's novel, and presents readers with an interpretation of the ethics of war. Finally, I will survey Niska's place in Boyden's novel. As the most traditional and one of the most powerful characters in the story, Niska provides readers with a world view in contrast to the colonial forces that threaten her way of life. She helps readers to consider the implications of colonial expansion and violence and to call into question the ethics of environmental exploitation.

### ***Boyden's World***

Boyden's novel, while set in the Ontario North, discusses the experience of colonialism from a Native Canadian perspective in a way that challenges the mythologized Canadian Nation of CanLit, perhaps more powerfully for being set in the typically valorized spaces of Canadian Literature: the north and the trench. Boyden's characters venture out of their home communities and into the devastating sphere of war, highlighting the often forgotten role of Native Canadians in the Canadian Armed Forces. Set in Northern Ontario and Europe in 1919, Three Day Road intertwines the stories of Xavier Bird, an Oji-Cree, morphine-addicted WWII veteran returning from the front lines, and Niska, his aunt to whom he is returning. Boyden begins with Xavier's unexpected homecoming and reveals the characters through isolated but related stories rather than a continuous and linear narrative. Boyden's mixture of narrative strategies, speaking through Niska, then Xavier, and his choice to allow his characters to speak to each other, then directly to the reader, makes his story not only a very personal one, but also challenges the reader's "normal" conception of perspective, authority<sup>13</sup>, time and reality in fiction, mirroring the alternative views of time and reality in Native cultures.

Boyden traces Xavier's experience as a sniper in the trenches with his best friend, Elijah, through morphine-induced dreams and stories recounted in the presence of Niska. At the same time, Boyden depicts Niska's journey to meet her nephew, both along the river to the train station

and throughout her life in chosen isolation in the Northern Ontario bush. The connection of Niska and Xavier to the "old way of life," to traditional Cree culture is rich and strong. They are the last descendants from a long family line of *windigo* killers: *windigos* are those human beings who succumb to madness, becoming something other than human, preying on human flesh for food, and they "grow into wild beasts" (41). *Windigos* spring from the earth naturally in times of unnatural hardship, the result of extreme imbalance in environmental pressures and human response. As Niska describes:

They talked of my father's reputation as a *windigo* killer, of how as a young man he became our *hookimaw* after killing a family of them who roamed near where we trapped, a family who had once been part of the caribou clan but had turned one hard winter and begun preying on the camps of unsuspecting Cree. (41)

It is the job of the *windigo* killer to kill those who have "turned," to protect their community not only from the cannibalistic tendencies of the *windigo* but also from the madness that has the ability to spread in times of desperation. It is the desperation of WWI, along with the expansion of colonial forces into Northern Ontario and communities of Native Canadians, upon which the novel focuses. Boyden draws upon the similarities between these two environments (both cultural and physical) to discuss madness and loss amongst characters whose world-view is being challenged and slowly eradicated. As Niska explains poignantly to Xavier:

The world is a different place in this new century, Nephew. And we are a different people. My visions still come but no one listens any longer to what they tell us, what they warn us. I knew even as a young woman that destruction bred on the horizon. In my early visions, numbers of men, higher than any of us could count, were cut down. They lived in the mud like rats and lived only to think of new ways to kill one another. No one is safe in such times, not even the Cree of Mushkegowuk. War touches everyone, and *windigos* spring from the earth. (45)

The story of Niska and Xavier unfolds as they travel towards their home in the bush near Moose Factory in Northern Ontario. They paddle the river on the three day journey home, a journey which references the "Three Day Road," the road embarked upon by the human spirit after death.

Niska and Xavier travel this metaphorical road as a large part of Xavier has died in the war and he has come home intending to finish the death that has started. Niska tells stories as a form of medicine for her nephew, Xavier as a part of his journey along the road, at the end of which he will have to decide if death is the release he seeks.

### *Conflicting? Landscapes*

Throughout the novel, Boyden provides rich environmental descriptions, both of the backwoods of Northern Ontario and of the war-torn fields of Europe. Seemingly very different places, these landscapes enter into a relationship with each other in the novel, providing a point comparison for readers as Boyden lays out the differences and similarities between them. The two are portrayed as contrasting but not opposite spaces, with the role of the environment shifting in the lives of the characters as they move between the them. It is at the extremes of either place, continued killing in the war in France and extreme famine and hardship in Ontario, where these spaces most look like one another. It is also in the extremities of these spaces where the *windigo* arise: when an improper valuing of human life prevails and madness takes over. Boyden's ability to make his readers think about the similarities between the "wilderness" of Ontario and the "wildness" of the trench warfare points to the very profound connection each of these spaces have to the Canadian literary imagination. Both of these spaces reflect a common theme in Canadian writing, identified specifically by Margaret Atwood as *Survival* (41). While Atwood asserts that "[o]ur stories are likely to be tales not of those who made it but of those who made it back from the awful experience – the North, the snowstorm, the sinking ship – that killed everyone else" (42), Boyden's novel engages with the theme of survival in a different way. It seems that Canadian literature typically focuses on surviving the environment (part of the "out there" of Frye's garrison mentality), and while Boyden's characters do find themselves in harrowing situations as a result of

environmental factors, it is human violence that they must survive: the cruel nuns in the town Catholic school, the “Hun” enemy fire, the encroaching laws of colonialist rule, Elijah’s increasingly dangerous and unpredictable slip into madness. It is through his emphasis on the similarities between these two immensely different environments that Boyden highlights the importance of human intent and action in shaping those environments in which his characters must survive. Boyden calls into question our understanding of the word “wilderness” as the trench looks and feels very much like the bush, and the bush smells and tastes very much like the trench.

Pastoralism informs writing and thinking about the Canadian North, as it is presented in CanLit as the main component of Canadian identity as well as a snowy Canadian utopia<sup>14</sup>. Specifically, the “True North, strong and free” is written into Canadian literary history in much the same way that the American rural west is written upon the American imagination. The North acts as a frontier region, a place to protect, and the space in and upon which gender and race constructions are played out (Hulan 21). It is also the place to which Canadians turn their attention during periods of “intense nationalist feeling” (Hulan 11). This is the space of “Canadian pastoralism.” New writes of the images painted by the Group of Seven, which have been imprinted on the national consciousness as a romantic ideal: “This view – of a wilderness ‘heartland’ painted in Canadian Shield colours – underlies the standard Anglophone literary, geographical, and historical designs of Canada that appeared during the 1940s and 1950s,” a standard which has permeated Canadian national identity to this day through the writing of Pratt, Frye, Creighton, and LePan (to name but a few) and through the proliferation of images of and similar to the Group of Seven (New 142-143). Boyden challenges this conception of the North as the Canadian pastoral space of virtue and romance, masculinity and adventure, by providing his readers with a decidedly unromantic view of the Ontario North:

I feel a burn like wasps stinging my scalp, and when I reach up to brush the annoyance away, the cinders that smoulder on my head burn my fingers as well...Not able to breathe, I bend closer to the ground and continue on, listening for Elijah's voice. We'd camped only ten yards from the river, but I can't see the water. The smoke suffocates me, and a stand of trees to my left bursts into flame with a whoosh and crackle, hurting my ears deep inside. I drop to my knees and crawl, shouting out to Elijah. I cannot hear him answer. (49)

The violence described in this passage is echoed throughout the pages in which Xavier and Elijah try to survive the atrocities of WWI trench warfare:

Another shell screams in, then another. They are landing so close that the air is sucked out of my lungs and I cannot breathe. I roll onto my stomach and begin crawling. I have no idea what has happened to the others. Shards of frozen earth rain down on me as I find a dugout and roll in. Impossible to see anything in the smoke and darkness. The earth smells burnt. (292)

In this way, Boyden points out the similarities between war and the Canadian wilderness, disrupting our serene and utopic understanding of what it is to live in the north. Boyden does not give us a peaceful world of grey and white, but rather a world in which fire, hunger, and colonial violence paint the landscape red with blood and black with embers. Further, by presenting these similarities Boyden suggests that the trench is in fact a wilderness itself, and in this case a decidedly Canadian one into which nationalist young men flock and are rewarded for their valour. For Elijah, the most skilled and decorated man in his platoon, madness erupts as easily in the trench as it does in the wild: "I see a hunger in Elijah that he can't satisfy. He goes out on his own to snipe now that I don't want to go into the field any more" (301). This is the same tension that Xavier sees in the bush: "The danger of the fire so close seems to do something to Elijah that I am not sure I like" (48), bringing our understanding of these spaces even closer together. Elijah's madness hints at something dark and dangerous that lurks in both places, regardless of location, and which has serious consequences in either setting. It is those who are most skilled and take the most pleasure in surviving in these extreme circumstances that begin to lose their own humanity,

becoming not only something wild, but also emblematic of the slip into immorality of modern industrial society.

### *Xavier*

Xavier Bird, one of the two narrating characters of Three Day Road is a quiet and reflective man, the son of an alcoholic Cree woman. Rescued by his Aunt Niska, Xavier grows up in the northern Ontario bush, learning how to hunt and survive from his skilled aunt. It is through Xavier that we come to know his best friend, Elijah. The reason behind Xavier's enlistment in the Army, Elijah straddles the line between traditional indigenous culture and euroWestern civilization, occupying both spaces effectively and easily. Elijah is presented as a trickster figure, a common character type in Native Canadian stories, as he exists precariously close to the edge between *windigo* and human. With knowledge of Elijah in both places, it is Xavier who perceives and finally understands what is happening to Elijah in the trenches. Elijah uses the skills he learned from Xavier in the bush of Northern Ontario along with his mastery of the English language learned from nuns in the Moose Factory Catholic school to become one of the best snipers in the Canadian Army, as well as one of the most well-liked men in his platoon. Both Elijah and Xavier utilize their hunting skills to stalk and kill German soldiers, but Elijah becomes increasingly wild and dangerous in the process. Xavier narrates: "Elijah goes into another place when he is hunting. He forgets his British accent and his bragging, is patient. And he becomes more watchful. He moves with no wasted movement, like a wolf on some smaller animal's trail" (104). Elijah uses the English language, imposed as a tool of domination over the Native Canadian communities, as a means to manipulate and mediate his experience with the urban environment, in a way that Xavier cannot. It is Elijah who yearns to join the army, experiments with morphine, procures a prostitute for Xavier, hunts and kills for pleasure,

and eventually crosses over the threshold and becomes *windigo* as he begins to collect the scalps of the men he kills. Xavier describes:

The look in Elijah's eyes is frightening. I can only believe that this war has made my friend this way. Elijah, he will get better when we are gone from it, I think. I nod and then turn away, wandering far enough that I don't have to think of the tearing of scalp from skull. (283)

It is in Elijah that we see the traditional Cree culture and urbanization, war and wilderness meet most intimately, and it is here that we begin to understand these spaces as reflections of human experience rather than spaces in opposition to one another.

The lives of Xavier Bird and Elijah Whiskeyjack are intimately linked, from the first page of the novel and throughout the rest of the story. While Xavier and Elijah can in some ways be read in opposition to each other, their lives are so entwined that the line between one character and the other is often blurred, both for the reader and for the other characters in the story. Indeed the distinction between the two characters is often so slight that we may wonder if they are two sides of the same character. At the outset, we are told through Niska that it will be Elijah arriving home from France and that Xavier has been killed, but it is Xavier who steps off the train and Elijah who has perished on the battlefield. Niska describes:

He is an old man I think. So skinny. This cannot be the Elijah I know. One leg of his pants is pinned up and hangs down a little way, empty. When he is off the steps I begin to back away, thinking it is not him. He looks up and I see his face, thin and pale, high cheekbones, and ears sticking out from beneath his hat. I stumble a little, the blood rushing away from my head. The ghost of my nephew Xavier looks at me. (6)

It is after death, when Elijah is killed and Xavier lives, that they are most completely confused for one another, when Xavier is angry, addicted to morphine, and dying himself, and when the line between *windigo* and *windigo* killer is most blurred. Xavier must kill Elijah as he turns *windigo* in a crater under heavy enemy fire:



"It has gone too far, hasn't it," he says. "I've gone too far, haven't I." His words wake my body. Elijah's hands reach for my throat ... "Elijah," I whisper, eyes blurring from the tears. "Elijah." Elijah doesn't struggle any more, just stares up at me. "You've gone mad. There is no coming back from where you've traveled." I press down harder. Elijah's eyes shine with tears. His face grows a dark red. He tries to whisper words to me but I know that I cannot allow Elijah to speak them. I must finish this. I have become what you are, Niska. (340)

It is only through Elijah's death that Xavier can begin the journey on his own three day road and in the process come to terms with his fate as a *windigo* killer. With Niska as a witness, Xavier is finally able to ask forgiveness of his dead friend and his journey changes direction; no longer pointed towards self hate and remorse, Xavier continues his journey along the river and towards his home.

Boyden also links the two men through their experiences with the environment. The education that Xavier provides Elijah in the bush of Northern Ontario becomes the foundation upon which their success on the battlefield is built. As boys, Xavier and Elijah trap and hunt, and learn to survive the perils of the wilderness including an encounter with a massive and highly destructive forest fire.

"No! The fire's running north faster than we could." We look around at the exploding world, the flames lighting up the night. "If we head back north, all we'll do is keep pace with the worst of it. It will eat us up." I am not sure. I ask, "How far south will we have to travel to get out of this?" "It burned along the river already, burned up all the bush," he says, and I think I see Elijah grin, his teeth glinting. Why? "I'm sure that a couple miles upriver it will be clear. Smoky, but clear." Around us, there is fire on all sides, bright walls of it. I hear a building roar and the hiss of embers falling into water. I breathe in and cough. "Let's go then," I shout. "For a little while. If there's no let-up, we try floating out." I look. Yes, Elijah, he is smiling. (50)

Their experience in the fire, the surrounding chaos and massive destruction is referenced throughout their time on the front lines when under heavy enemy fire. So too is their experience hunting in the bush, the long hours of lying still and the acquired ability to move quietly and unseen as they track German soldiers and become celebrated snipers. But most importantly, it is the glimpse of Elijah's strangeness, his tendency towards madness, which Xavier recognizes for the

first time in the above passage. These glimpses are repeated throughout the novel, becoming increasingly frequent as Elijah kills more, and their environment tumbles further into chaos, finally culminating in his descent into madness and Elijah's turn to *windigo*. So, through Xavier and Elijah, Boyden aligns war and the wilderness in two distinct ways: first through the transferability of the skills learned in each space and second through Elijah's tendency toward madness as both places slip into chaos in the face of massive destruction. It is the ease of Elijah's mastery of the skills necessary to be a hunter, both in the northern Ontario bush and as an army sniper, that situates him on the boundary of *windigo* regardless of where he is hunting. The pleasure and expertise with which he kills is representative of a larger issue: a world in which human life is expendable and hunting is for reward of courage and masculinity rather than for the basic necessities of life. This is the space of world warfare, where humans no longer retain their humanity and "*windigos* spring from the earth" (45). These spaces illustrate a changing world in which colonial and industrial forces are erasing Cree culture locally, and upsetting the balance of society across the world. Elijah's madness represents the clashing of these two worlds and humanity's inability to come to terms with these changes.

### ***Niska***

Niska is portrayed throughout the novel as a strong earth mother figure and the keeper of Cree culture. Although she bears no children of her own, she raises Xavier when her sister Rabbit is unable in her all consuming alcoholism. Niska lives alone in the bush, hunting and gathering all of her own foods, only entering the nearby town when absolutely necessary. She lives outside the boundary of euroWestern civilization and remains respected within the Cree community. Niska is the person to whom the Cree community turns in times of scarcity to divine the location of moose herds, or to deal with those who have turned *windigo*. Rather than paint his characters as a part of

nature, a part easily encompassed by colonial forces, Boyden empowers his central characters by highlighting that it is Niska's ability and willingness to recognize the power inherent in nature that gives her great power. While not within the realm of euroWestern understanding, in which the mind and body are split and to identify with nature in a way contrary to science is to be led astray (Chawala 23), Niska's power is well within her own understanding. Her acquisition of power, which may seem magical or unimaginable to the modern North American reader, is a part of her own worldview, one in which there exists no split between body and mind, human and nature, and thus is not magical or unimaginable at all. Her power is also entangled in her worldview and her ability to understand and manipulate her environment in a way that does not correspond to a Western view of the world. Through the centrality of Niska to the story, Boyden challenges his readers to move beyond an understanding of human interaction with nature within the confines of Cartesian dualism, as for her the mind and body are not split, nor is she separate from her environment. Boyden places his character in contrast to a modern scientific understanding of the world, in which thinking is the ultimate human task, and in which consciousness is only connected with the soul.<sup>15</sup> In such a view, the body, and all else outside of the mind (environment included), is not connected with this higher level of truth, and therefore insignificant. Niska's ability to divine the location of moose using pieces of bone, to heal her nephew using storytelling and the *matatosowin*, the sweatlodge, and to interact with *manitous* (spirits), are very significant to the story, and collectively challenge the very foundation of "truth" as presented in a scientific view of the world.

Niska, then, is the keeper of Cree culture for the community depicted by Boyden. It is Niska who teaches Xavier and Elijah to hunt and the ways of the Cree people, and it is indeed these skills that they take with them onto the battlefields of France. Niska is the only character that can nurse Xavier back to health (and life) using stories, ritual, and magic when Western medicine has failed him. By introducing a character so powerful due in part to culture and in part to "nature,"

Boyden complicates our understanding of the relationship between the two in euroWestern understandings. So too, does Boyden challenge the (North) American pastoral understanding of nature as a space of innocence, by making it the source of power for a woman who can both heal and destroy. He illustrates that conceptualizations such as “innocent” and “safe,” with their loaded associations and varied understandings, do not apply to nature or the environment in any real way.

Niska, like Elijah, lives her life on the boundary; she takes risks and follows her intuition, living alone in the bush and shunning life in the nearby town. Though her encounters with people from the town are purposefully limited, she does take on a French trapper as her lover for a time. Niska’s encounter with the French trapper begins in the natural landscape around her home, their courtship taking the form of an extended trapping effort, offering a reprise from the loneliness that she had been experiencing in the bush. Niska welcomes the trapper into her home and into her life but recognizes that their relationship is beginning to diminish the power that she has as a *windigo* killer. The French trapper, like Elijah and unlike Niska, can straddle life in the bush and life in the town, trapping in the wild while living and having sexual relations with numerous other Cree women in the town. The Frenchman is depicted as a wild thing, a man using sex to consume his female partners, described by an old woman in the town:

“Be careful of that one. They say he has a taste for red meat that he can’t satisfy. There are little half-French, half-Indian children running around this place that he refuses to claim.” I nodded thanks for the warning. “This is not the place for you, Little One. You are a *hookimaw*, from a strong family. Happiness is not yours to have. You are a *windigo* killer.” She said this as if it were a sentence being passed down. (157)

Through this passage we can see that the Frenchman, like Elijah, is positioned precariously close to *windigo*, in his inability to satisfy his “hunger.”

Further, the Frenchman epitomizes the colonization and invasion of the land that has occurred in and around Moose Factory, as he has sex with Niska on the altar of the town church in an attempt to strip her of the power that he recognizes in her:

He laughed. "I fucked you in a church," he said, and smiled. I smiled back at him. "I fucked the heathen Indian out of you in this church," he said, but this time the smile was not happy. "I took you *ahcahk*," he said to me, the smile gone now. "Do you understand? I fucked your *ahcahk*, your spirit. Do you understand that?" ... "It's too late," he said. "You are nothing special, just another squaw whore. I took your power away in this place and sent it to burn in hell where it belongs." (161)

The trapper believes that his penetration of Niska touches her spirit and drives it toward Christianity, referencing the earlier experiences of Niska with the school nuns who wished to impose their language and religion as a means of control. The trapper's understanding of the environment is typically colonial: that it is something to be claimed and exploited, a view in opposition to Niska's way of life. Through his violent act against her, it is evident that the trapper sees Niska as a wild animal to be tamed, when it is he who is most wild. This interaction in particular, and Niska's experiences with the colonial society that pushes its way farther into her world in general, illustrate the incompatibility of these opposing worldviews. More specifically, Niska's experiences illustrate the violence with which people subscribing to an understanding of the world which differed from that of their European colonizers were treated.

### *Conclusion*

In concluding this discussion, I want to return to the issue of Canadian literary identity presented earlier. In his decision to move his characters outside of the North and onto the battlefields of France in WWI, Boyden exposes how intimately his characters are linked to the environment surrounding Moose Factory, the Northern Ontario landscape. Xavier and Elijah miss home, and use the skills that they learned there to be successful in battle. Boyden explores the tension that

exists between the wild and colonized spaces of Canada, exposing the North not as a frontier or mysterious place of wonder, but as an invaded and colonized space full of racism, oppression, and scarcity. In doing so, Boyden presents a voice that is typically silenced, that of the Native Canadian community. This choice complicates and challenges our understanding of the North as a frontier and highly exploitable space. By presenting his readers with an extremely complex environment, one that is not only dynamic but also powerful on a number of levels, Boyden highlights the different roles the landscape may play in forming an identity (individual and national) and shaping the lives of the people who live within it. In particular, through her power to both heal and destroy, Niska illustrates the power possible in relationships with the land, and points to the undervaluing of the environment in euroWestern societies. This is the landscape in which Xavier and Elijah became the men that they are, and where Niska thrives and is comfortable. This is also the landscape that Xavier enters into to begin the healing process as he returns from the front lines, and where Niska uses her powers as a *windigo* killer to help her nephew come to terms with his own identity and start to heal. Boyden's characters not only inhabit the Northern Ontario bush, it is also a part of them. Boyden's characters include a connection to place, to where they were born, in their conception of their own identities.

At the same time, however, Boyden draws parallels between two vastly different environments, war-torn France and colonized Canada. This causes the reader to question the validity and authenticity of the link between the characteristics of place to which we are supposed to relate as Canadians within the shared experience of national identity. If a war-torn land across the ocean can be so similar to the Northern Ontario wilderness, where does that leave Canada? Even further, Boyden exposes the trench as a Canadian construct of both history and nature: a place in which masculinized individuals set out to move their "frontier" farther into enemy territory. On the home front, colonial powers force their way into the Northern Ontario wilderness through

Niska's experience, the pinnacle of which is the French trapper's violation of her in the name of a Christian god. Here, Niska is the embodiment of a feminized "wilderness," one which masculinized "culture" forces its way in. What could be more familiar to the Canadian imagination than this forced entry into the "wilderness"? For me, it is these questions that Boyden raises, that define our very Canadian-ness. It is the conversation between where we were born, where we live, and how these places connect in spite of their difference that is the essence of the Canadian experience. Boyden's ability to raise these issues in the imagination of the reader is the reason Three Day Road is such an interesting novel from an ecocritical perspective. This tendency toward environmental reflection based on place, and the exploration of differing experiences with such a place, will contribute to the so desperately needed redefinition of Canadian literature's contribution to our nation's understanding of itself.

## Chapter 4

### *Rudy*

Rudy looked out the window over the badly manicured lawn. Beside him, the large fish tank hummed constantly. Someone should fix that noise, he thought, it was annoying. Rudy slowly moved his head to glance at the clock. His son was late again. Things weren't like they were when Rudy was growing up. Kids didn't respect their parents like they used to, even once they had their own children. His children rarely visited him now that he was in the hospital. After all he had done for them: putting a roof over their heads and food in their bellies. Times were different now.

Rudy had always hated small spaces. *Hated* them. The basements of his youth had made him dizzy and nauseated. The low ceilings of the hospital lobby now made his shoulders tense. Rudy wondered now how at seventeen he had found himself on a naval ship, crossing the Atlantic headed for Murmansk. The goddamned Soviet Union of all places. At home he had figured *what the hell?* He knew he didn't want the army: besides, the sea seemed as good a place as any to spend his time during a war. So, he had lied about his age, joined the Royal Canadian Navy, left his West Toronto home where he had lived all of his life in the company of his parents, and took a train packed with baby-faced soldiers to the East Coast. On the deck of the HMCS Picton he found himself questioning his judgment. He remembered holding onto the metal railing for dear life.

Some days Rudy was surprised by the deterioration of his body. Most surprising were not the wrinkles or the lost hair, but the odd things, like the purple swelling of his ankles after a couple of hours in his wheelchair. When he was in the Navy, Rudy had been tall and slim, his brown hair too unwieldy for the stern features of his face. He was quiet boy, and shy. He had made few friends aboard the corvette, none that he kept in contact with after the war. He spent much of his time alone. It wasn't that he liked it that way; it was just the way it was. There were lots of things Rudy couldn't change. Like the terrible hospital food, rivaled only by the slop he had eaten in the Navy.

Since he had started living in the hospital, Rudy had spent most of his time waiting. He waited for his family to show up, he waited for his meals to be served, he waited for someone to come and help him take a shit. He felt like it had always been that way. When he was younger he didn't mind waiting around so much. He did remember however, that once he got on the boat it took an eternity to get to the Scotland, another to get to Murmansk. Although Rudy understood that the HMCS Picton was part of the huge Allied trade network, he didn't consider it any further. He was just a Seaman, so he didn't bother to get involved. He didn't matter. Rudy had spent his days working on the deck and looking out over the water. He drank heavily in the evenings when he could. God he missed bourbon. The doctor said his liver couldn't handle any more liquor, but Rudy still begged his eldest son bring it to him. His son hadn't obliged his request since about a year after Rudy moved into the hospital. Rudy suspected that one of the nurses had got to him. Rudy had been a quiet drunk, watching his shipmates intently, often making them uncomfortable in his gaze. Whenever a confrontation arose, Rudy would rely on his shipmates to restrain Jimmy or Joe or Maurice, and would quietly slip from the confusion. He had only actually been hit twice.

Rudy had nothing to do but watch the men around him die. He watched them breathe through machines they pushed around like shopping carts. He watched them slop food all over their fucking faces when they ate. He couldn't even give them shit for it; since his last stroke all that



came out of his mouth were unrecognizable slurs. When he was a young boy, Rudy had spent his evenings on the front porch. He would listen to his parents argue and watch the neighborhood boys play hockey. He would sit on the cold concrete or lean on the metal railing that enclosed the veranda. Sometimes, before he got too tall, he would balance himself on the small green rail, tensing his legs to steady his body. He would stay that way until his mother called for dinner.

Rudy began to wonder if his wife would visit today. One of the last times she came to the hospital Rudy had been agitated and swung his cane at her. He had missed, but she had been angry, unwilling to accept his slurred apology. Since then, Vincenza had looked nervous to be around him.

Rudy remembered meeting Anna the second time his corvette docked at Murmansk. She was a waitress at the small Soviet pub not far from the busy allied trading port. Rudy had wandered into the dark musty room intending to drink vodka until the barmaid turned out the lights. Anna was homely, barely seventeen. Rudy had sat alone, looking over the heads of the other men in the bar, tilting his head back to pour vodka into his gut as fast as possible. It was Anna's job to ask him to leave at the end of the night. He looked at her blankly, nodded, turned and walked into the night.

Rudy's disdain for his family had started early, and continued until his parents died. He remembered his mother raising chickens in the backyard; his father had been a butcher. They never learned to speak English. Animals were slaughtered and cut up in the basement and his mother picked dandelions from the side of the road. She had looked like a homeless woman in her homemade dresses. His parents argued. They talked about the "Old Country" as if it had existed on the front lawn. They ate differently, they dressed differently, they acted differently. Rudy's name didn't fit in: Rudolfo De Cinquenta. He had dreaded the first day of school when he would have to tell his teacher how to pronounce his name and ask that she please call him Rudy. He could feel the twenty pairs of eyes on the back of his skull as he kept his own on the clock. After school he didn't wait around to face the taunting, but walked swiftly along College Street. For a time he had considered changing his name legally, he just never got around to it.

Rudy repositioned his chair so that he could see the elevator doors out of the corner of his eye as he looked out the window. He would never tell his family, but he enjoyed watching them as the doors slid open and they stepped out into the hospital lobby. It made him angry when they did not appear as the doors opened. It was the sound that the door had made that Rudy remembered most vividly about his next meeting with Anna. He had walked into the bar, heard the door close with a low thud. He had motioned to Anna that he wanted a shot of vodka; she had brought his drink and placed it on the table in front of him. He had looked up into her face then, but she stared back without recognition, turned and walked back to the bar. Rudy watched her large hips sway as she walked away; he poured the tepid vodka down his throat.

The sound of the elevator door interrupted his thoughts. He watched a young woman and her blonde daughter step off the elevator, causing him to become even more angry at his son.

Rudy found the hospital freezing cold. As one of the nurses walked by, he slurred a request for the heat to be turned up. He told her that he suspected that the nurses were trying to give them all pneumonia to kill them faster. The nurse nodded with a polite smile and kept walking. It was the frigid cold of the nighttime that Rudy had hated most about being on the HMCS Picton. It

was then that he had been forced to join the crew below decks. Descending the narrow staircase he could feel the panic rising in his throat. He had felt the weight of the low smoke-stained ceiling pressing on his temples. He would search out liquor, whatever he could find. Fuck he missed vodka. The cold outside had reminded him of Toronto in February: an unforgiving wet cold. But below decks, the smell of the musty heat of so many male bodies reminded Rudy of his father's dark basement in the springtime. The smell of warm blood as Pietro De Cinquenta slid his sharp butchering blade across the neck of a squirming lamb. The rope attached to the low ceiling as his father skinned the carcass skillfully. It was the lowing of his roommates through the night that made the panic rise in Rudy's throat now. He would take the sounds of a dying lamb in a second.

The new, young, fat nurse came around the corner to announce to the men in the lobby that their lunches were waiting for them in their rooms. Rudy didn't move as the other men pushed themselves along. He sat staring at the fat nurse. He knew that she could feel him watching her as she made her way down the hallway. Rudy had been able to tell that Anna knew that he was watching her. He hadn't cared if it made her uncomfortable. He had watched her as he swallowed drink after drink. He didn't speak, had just motioned when he wanted his glass refilled. His gaze only faltered when Anna looked him straight in the face; his eyes darted in search of a legitimate focus. At the end of the night, Rudy had waited for Anna to ask him to leave the bar. As she walked towards him he stood up; when she was close to him he looked directly into her eyes. The girl stared back, startled. A moment passed between them: *Okay* she said slowly. Rudy had placed his hand on the small of her back and walked out the door. He leaned on the brick wall in the cold of the early morning. Anna emerged, glanced at Rudy and prompted him to follow her into the shadows behind the bar. Once the nurse was out of sight, Rudy began pulling his wheelchair toward his room using his left leg.

After lunch, Rudy locked himself in the bathroom and tried to jerk off. He hadn't been successful in some time, but fumbled with his half hard dick anyway. He couldn't remember the last time he had had sex. Sex with his wife had been infrequent at best, but mostly unmemorable. Sex with Anna had been brief and rigid. Standing against the back wall of the bar, Rudy waited as Anna undid his pants and grabbed at his erection. He fumbled with her clothes, searching for her breasts then moving his hands down her belly and underneath the folds of her skirt. Her feet had made small crunching noises on the cold ground as he groped her. Her breath was quick and smelled of alcohol. She guided Rudy inside her, pushing her hips into his. Rudy had bent his knees to push deeper, his bony fingers pressed against the icy wall. He came quickly. He looked into her face. In the dark she looked soft and for a moment he was disoriented. He blinked his eyes and pulled away from her, looking over her shoulder. They fixed their clothes in silence. Then he walked her to the door of the bar and kissed her stiffly on her cold cheek. *See you around*, he said.

Rudy could not zip up his pants. He struggled to reposition himself on the toilet, but was unable to lift his weight with his weak arms. After a few moments he reached for his cane and used it to bang against the bathroom wall. Soon, a nurse called his name from the other side of the door and used her key to unlock it. Her eyes found his semi-erect penis and she stared at his nakedness for a moment before moving towards him. With surprising strength she lifted his weight back into his chair and fixed his clothes. Rudy gave her a humiliated nod of thanks and pulled himself back into his room. Rudy remembered that his first sexual encounter with a girl had also been humiliating. Behind the school he had waited for the short blonde girl he knew lived on Grace Street. He had waited in the same spot before, watching for her as she walked home from the

bakery where she worked. Two days prior, Rudy had asked her name. She had hesitated for a moment: *My name is Maria*. She did not ask his name. Rudy had stood, saying nothing. She had cleared her throat eventually and raised her eyebrows at him. Finally he had blurted *Can I meet you here on Wednesday?* She nodded, amused, then turned and walked away. Wednesday, Rudy waited. As he saw Maria turn the corner and approach him, he had been still. He had not moved as she placed her hand on his elbow and smiled at him. Only after Maria started walking had Rudy's muscles started to twitch. He walked three paces behind her, stopping a yard away when she turned to face him. She stepped towards him. Rudy did not move. Maria reached out and lightly brushed her hand across Rudy's cheek; his body convulsed and he hardened. She smiled, moved her hand down his chest and lightly over his crotch. Rudy's knees buckled and warm sticky liquid caught in the front fold of his briefs. Rudy ran. He did not turn back.

Rudy rummaged through his bedside table looking for the hard candies that he knew his wife had left him. Rudy always had hard candies with him. Or licorice, whatever was easier to come by. He had developed that habit aboard the corvette; it helped the nausea. Once he had left Anna and boarded the corvette, Rudy sucked a hard candy and looked east as they traveled. Time passed slowly for Rudy heading west. He found the wet weather of the Scottish winter nearly unbearable in the trading port, Loch Ewe. It reminded him of November. He hated November. Rudy had not wandered far from the ship, he felt connected to it. It had been a new feeling for him. When he found his candies Rudy slipped them into his pocket so that he could find them easily if one of his grandchildren came with his son.

The men in the lobby looked expectantly up at him as he entered the lobby. When they saw it was only Rudy they went back to playing cards, reading the paper, staring vacantly into space. Anna had looked at Rudy that way when he returned to the bar. He motioned for a shot of vodka and sat himself down. Anna brought Rudy his drink, lightly brushing his hand as she turned to walk away. She didn't look at him. He smiled to himself, mistaking the gesture for tenderness. It was not until late into the evening that Rudy realized that Anna was ignoring him. When he caught her looking in his direction she quickly turned her back. Rudy became nervous. He drank more quickly, keeping his gaze steadily on the door. Longing rose in his chest. Anna finally appeared at his table. *The bar is closed*. Rudy did not move. After a moment, she leaned closer to him. He had breathed in her smell. *I need to talk to you*, she said. Rudy nodded. He reached into his pocket and placed money on the table.

Rudy was one of the men who gazed vacantly out the window or watched the tinny sounding lobby TV. He could not speak, so was uncomfortable playing cards and he had never been a reader. He had stopped school in grade five. He simply refused to go. He had stayed at home for the first year, helping his mother around the house, sitting on the veranda in the evenings. Although his mother welcomed the company, his father demanded that he go to work, pull his own weight. At the age of eleven years and two months, Rudy began working at a local diner, washing dishes, slinging garbage, and mopping floors. At first he hadn't minded that work; it got him away from his family. Soon though, he found that his hands were cracked from washing and his arms sore from carrying buckets. When Rudy complained to his father the old man said simply in Italian, *Go to school or go to work. Your choice*. So off he went to the diner each morning. When he was nearly fourteen he landed a job at the Monarch, the tavern on Clinton Street. The pay was only slightly better, but the work was harder, and the hours were long, keeping

him away from home late into the night. It was the Monarch that took him back when he returned from the Navy.

Adjusting the blanket his wife had made him on his legs, Rudy thought about how uncomfortably cold he was. His slippers were not thick enough, and his left one was worn right through from dragging it along the floor. When his son arrived Rudy would ask him to get him new slippers. Maybe he would even ask his wife to make him a thicker blanket. Rudy remembered waiting for Anna in the frigid cold. If Scotland was November cold, Russia was the type of cold the devil would be. When Anna placed her hand on the back of his arm he was so startled that he swung around nearly knocking her off her feet. He looked up at her in dismay: *Sorry, sorry, I didn't hear you.* Anna nodded at his apology. Rudy waited for her to speak. He forgot to breathe. Anna started slowly, her accent thick and her words hesitant, *I am pregnant. It is from you.* Rudy's temples began to hurt. Anna had dropped her eyes to the ground. *Marry me,* he said quietly.

Sometime in the mid-afternoon Rudy wondered again where his wife was. When she took the bus she usually arrived at the hospital before noon. She had been sleeping in lately, she claimed. Rudy thought she had become bored with their visits. He did not understand, they had been married a long time. The last time he saw his wife she had forgotten to bring his licorice and he had yelled at her. He had tried to apologize but she didn't understand him. He thought that after so many years together she should be able to recognize an apology. Rudy and Anna had been married quietly by the only priest in Murmansk who would perform the service. Soon after, the war ended. When the HMCS Picton docked for the last time in Murmansk, Rudy spent the night at Anna's parents' house. They had not been happy but they kept their mouths shut. Rudy knew his parents wouldn't approve. Rudy and Anna had spoken only briefly of the future; both had assumed that Rudy would eventually bring Anna to Canada.

Most afternoons were a blur of bad television for Rudy. He watched whatever the other men in the lobby put on; he didn't really care just liked the noise of the set. The journey back across the Atlantic had been a blur. The other men on the ship were much more at ease with each other now that the bow pointed towards home. Their travels had suddenly become adventures. As they spoke of the stories they would tell their girlfriends, their wives, their children, details were embellished early, innocently, until the stories in their minds and on their tongues grew, died, and were born again. Rudy had even told a tale or two, biting down hard on his tongue when he was slapped on the back in congratulations after the story of his quick marriage. In spite of the good spirits of the men, the journey had been hard; the longing for home palpable among the crew. Rudy had become increasingly anxious as the ship crawled over the water towards Canada. His longing had been opposite that of the other seamen; he had wanted painfully to be heading east.

Upon his return to Toronto from the Navy, Rudy simply slid back into the lives of his family members. His father barely looked up from his drink as Rudy entered the house for the first time in eighteen months, and his mother began nattering about the street gossip as if he had never been gone. They did not ask about his time aboard the HMCS Picton, nor did he offer them details. At the Monarch, he put aside whatever extra money he could to save for Anna's journey across the ocean. Often he drank alone in the dark after his shift. He began to find it harder to stash any money away at all.

The first letter Rudy received from Anna described a difficult pregnancy and a cold winter. Rudy read the loneliness in her shaky words as regret over their quick marriage. Near the end of her letter Anna asked when Rudy would send for her and suggested a few names for their unborn child. She finished by telling Rudy that she missed him, and signed her name Anna De Cinquenta. Rudy realized that he had never written a letter before. It took him three days to decide what to say, and still the letter was only three lines long. *Anna, I am sorry that your pregnancy is causing discomfort. I like the name Peter, or Laura if it is a girl. I will send for you as soon as I can. Yours, Rudy.*

When Rudy was unbearably bored of watching the television, he shifted his gaze back out the window. Just beyond the grass he could see the hospital parking lot if he strained. So from the window he could watch for his son's blue car or for the bus that might drop off his wife. During his vigil, he also watched the old maintenance man work on the hospital grounds, the strength in his movements visible even from the third floor. Rudy had gardened for a time. He had begun helping his mother in the backyard when the weather turned warm right after the war. He liked the way turning the soil made his muscles feel later in the day. He developed calluses on his hands and allowed his mind to wander to Anna. He became more focused on earning enough money to bring her to Toronto. He had started picking up more shifts at work and drank less of his money away. He wrote to Anna again to tell her that he had changed his mind and preferred the name John. Rudy couldn't remember the last time his hands had touched soil. His wife kept the garden now, and his sons had been doing the yard work since they were old enough to push the lawnmower.

Rudy stopped gardening in the fall. He could remember the day. It was a Monday morning, shortly before noon. Rudy's father walked into the garden and handed Rudy a letter postmarked from Murmansk. Rudy opened the tattered envelope and read the unfamiliar script. *Rudolfo De Cinquenta, Anna De Cinquenta has died during childbirth. Her child did not live. Their remains have been buried in Murmansk with other deceased members of the Mihailov family. We send our condolences. Sincerely, Yan Mihailov.* Rudy closed his eyes. He remembered that when his mother asked why he had become so still, Rudy shrugged his shoulders, put down his rake and walked inside the house.

Around five o'clock, Rudy thought his wife must not be coming to visit today. She must be having coffee with a friend or catching up on her stories on the television. Rudy realized that he could barely recall when he met Vincenza. She had worked at the Monarch with him, but he couldn't remember when she started. Rudy let her talk him into "going around." He was mostly indifferent about the beginning of their relationship, maintaining it because he thought it was expected of him. Six months later they were engaged to be married.

Rudy decided that his son would still visit, he was just late. His son was always late, he took after his mother. Vincenza had even been late to their wedding. They were married in Vincenza's church in front of their families early in April on a Saturday morning. They had a small reception lunch at her parents' house and then took the bus to Niagara Falls for their honeymoon. When they returned to the city they moved all of their things into Vincenza's parents' basement. Rudy found a new job as a meat packer at a deli on College Street. Vincenza took a job washing hair at a local salon. They saved up enough money to move a few streets north into a smalltown house. Rudy lived there until his oldest son had brought him to the hospital. They bought a car and

Vincenza picked out furniture. Rudy spent the evenings sitting on his verandah, drinking warm vodka or bourbon from a small glass. Vincenza tended the garden.

When the fat nurse came at half past five to tell the men in the lobby that their dinner was in their rooms, Rudy wondered if Vincenza had told their children that she was angry with him. The thought of his wife encouraging his own children not to come and see him made him furious. Rudy was initially reluctant to have children, but Vincenza had become pregnant anyhow. He was apprehensive throughout the pregnancy, even refusing to go to the hospital when his wife began to have labour pains. He called her parents and put her in a cab. She had not been happy. He waited at the kitchen table, drinking his vodka, until her father came through the front door to tell him that Vincenza had given birth to a son and was doing well. Rudy rose from his chair, staggered to the door, and followed his father-in-law to his car. Rudy smoked in silence the entire way to the hospital. He banged his cane on the floor in anger, until a nurse came to calm him down. He let himself be pushed back to his room.

As he ate, Rudy rubbed his eyes with the heel of his hand. He was so tired. He hadn't been able to sleep since he moved into the hospital. There was a time, when his family was young, that he didn't sleep at all. He had two healthy sons and Vincenza was pregnant again. Rudy just could not sleep. One night, lying on his back in the dark, Rudy realized that the letter could have been a lie. Anna could be alive. He could have a son. Rudy began scheming ways to get to Murmansk, to find the truth, and it was then that he drifted to sleep. When he woke in the morning he pushed the night's plans away, took the lunch that Vincenza had packed for him, and drove to work.

After dinner Rudy watched TV in his room. On the table beside his bed he kept a picture of his three children when they were little. But his children had grown up. Two went to university, one dropped out of highschool. They had all gotten married, moved out, had children of their own. Vincenza had grown old, her hair thin and her fingers rough. Rudy watched TV as she played with her grandchildren. He sat at the head of the table through family dinners, smoking and drinking, looking over their heads. He would rise from the table to sit outside, dulling the noise from inside with the screen door. Occasionally a grandchild would come and sit with him, but as they had grown older they grew tired of his few war stories.

A nurse came into Rudy's room to help him prepare for bed. She undressed him roughly, buttoned his pajamas and wheeled his chair to the bathroom. She helped him brush his teeth and made sure he was clean after he used the toilet. When Rudy had his first stroke Vincenza had taken care of him, but he was a nuisance. His children visited when they could, but they had their own families and rarely brought them along. Rudy had taken to wearing his slippers on the verandah and started speaking even less. He had another stroke. Then another. Vincenza hadn't been able to care for him anymore; he became angry and frustrated. Vincenza used to visit him in the veteran's ward every day except for Sunday when she had dinner with her children and their families. On Mondays, Rudy was always angry with her, hurtling incomprehensible insults and small objects. His jealousy surprised them both. Now she visited only three times a week. She said that's all she could handle on the bus, getting on and off hurt her knees. Rudy suspected that the nurses had talked to her. When the nurse closed the curtain around his bed he became dizzy, like he was on the corvette again. He tried to calm his nerves by sucking on a hard candy. When the

nurse had finished helping the other men into bed the lights in the room went out for the night. As he stared into the dark, Rudy supposed his son wouldn't be visiting him today.

*Then Stop.*

### A Conclusion

As I began to think about how to sum up this study, I realized that the project was a conversation in and of itself. The preceding chapters stood beside each other, commenting in very different ways on the varied relationships between the texts studied and the environments presented within their pages. Some chapters spoke in the voice of a lecturer, commenting on context, form and narrative as important pieces for environmental engagement. Some chapters spoke in the voice of a storyteller, tracing experience and environmental knowledge through magic, heartbreak and love. All of the chapters engaged with Alice's Adventures in Wonderland or Three Day Road ecocritically, aiming to expose environmental relationships and ideals, and exploring what the presentation of these may mean for a reader.

However, I find myself eager to discuss the experience as a whole. The practice of writing in two very different styles but from the same vantage point afforded me an opportunity to treat two extremely different texts, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Three Day Road extensively and intimately. I found myself engaged with the act of writing on a new level, resulting in a depth of understanding I've rarely encountered.

In treating the above texts in the standard ecocritical style, I became engaged with the ecocritical community through my research and through my approach. I inserted myself, as a student and an ecocritic, into this academic community and began to understand the advantages and shortcomings of the ecocritical method more fully. I traversed the history and glimpsed the future of ecocriticism through my investigation of the existing literature, and through my discussions with others in the field.

In particular, through my practice of ecocritical methodology, I experienced firsthand some of the advantages of this dynamic method. Ecocritical inquiry has the distinct possibility to be an



interdisciplinary practice, encouraging a broader range of understanding for critical engagement, and yielding a more in-depth exploration of environmental issues. As outlined in my introduction, there is no ubiquitous “environment,” but rather a range of environments, which include constructions of nature, gender, identity, place and time. Through its incorporation of literature from literary criticism, ecology, and cultural studies (among other academic disciplines), ecocriticism is better equipped to address these dynamic and complicated issues as they relate to representations of and relationships with the environment. It provides a vantage point for the consideration of environmental relationships presented in literature, a line of inquiry often left out for all but those texts which deal with environmental issues most blatantly. Exploring texts in this way exposes information regarding the construction of nature throughout society and its connection to other constructions such as race, gender, and childhood. It also helps us to understand how those constructions manifest themselves within literature, and how their presence translates onto culture outside of that literature.

Engaging with both Alice and Three Day Road ecocritically led me to explore the constructions of nature, childhood, gender and wilderness. More specifically, exploring the representations of the environment in Alice led me to investigate the connection between childhood and nature in child psychology, philosophy and modern euroWestern thought about childhood itself. Children are consistently presented as having a more “natural” connection with nature than adults, a belief reflected in children’s literature. Further, at the time of Alice’s conception, childhood and indeed the rest of industrial England were undergoing swift and significant changes in ideology, the perceived value of children and the overall functioning of society. These changes, and Carroll’s resulting frustration and anxiety, are reflected through Alice’s experiences and trials in Wonderland. Three Day Road similarly offered an opportunity to explore the construct of nature through Boyden’s depiction of his characters’ relationships with the landscapes they encountered.

In particular, Boyden's text focused on the "wilderness" as a construct but challenged its manifestation in the Canadian imagination by presenting an equally "wild" space in the trenches of WWI as those in Northern Ontario. Thus, the "wilderness", "nature" and "childhood" are all constructions which permeate literature and have their historical roots firmly planted in hegemonic, industrial and colonial discourses. Carroll and Boyden both present their readers with texts which question these discourses, and characters which offer an alternative way of relating with the world.

Ecocritical methodology can also be haphazard, however, sometimes lacking the self reflectiveness and depth of argument required to realize its potential for interdisciplinarity (Phillips 36; 44-45). It also remains largely inaccessible to those outside of the discipline, in its self referentiality and overall lack of self parody. For me, the difficulty in reading and digesting the majority of ecocritical writing is in its overall lack of a sense of humor and the employment of language which excludes those outside of the academy. I found the same difficulties in writing in the typical ecocritical style. Perhaps this is a product of literary criticism in general, but as a genre which preaches the importance of an inclusion of creative or alternative voices, I would expect ecocriticism to feel more accessible. And while very important, I do not believe that nature writing and nature poetry fulfill ecocriticism's claim<sup>16</sup> of inclusiveness, if only for the very simple reason that not everyone has an opportunity to enter into the nature presented in these mediums. More personally, I do not revere nature writing and poetry, and quite honestly find it mostly boring and flat. It is for this reason that in formulating my own priorities for ecocritical methodology, I incorporated narrative scholarship, but strayed far from the forests in both subject matter and writing style.

My narrative scholarship became focused on creative writing, absolutely based in personal experience, but more subtly so than its usual expression. I strove to stay away from the exclusivity of nature writing, choosing not only to vary the types of environment my writing referenced, but also

the types of writing styles I utilized. I worked to broaden the definition of ecocritical writing, having fun with my research and pushing the boundaries of “academic” engagement. Even further, I ignored the proclivity of ecocriticism for realist representations of the environment in writing *Amanda in Weddingland*, but offered environmental commentary in the likeness of narrative criticism. When my characters, such as those encountered in *Amanda in Weddingland*, were very much based on real people in my life, it was reality itself that I departed from: gravity didn’t obey the laws set out for it, time moved too fast, and size depended upon how much cake one consumed. When the characters were only loosely based on real people, as in *Rudy*, I had more leeway to explore their humanity and relationships, including relationships with their environment. This included the development of Rudy’s relationship with his environment (or lack thereof) as a representation of his own shortcomings in his family relationships. It also included a broader understanding of “environment” and Rudy’s interaction with these places, as Rudy moves from the outside spaces of his youth to the confines of the inside space of the hospital. So writing in the styles of realist fiction and children’s fantasy offered me a completely different experience than writing a piece of nature poetry would have. It was more playful, more fun, and helped me to depart from the conventional experiences of narrative scholarship and explore new territory. For me, factual representations of the environment or of “actual” events are not as important as an engagement with both the environment and an environmental ethic on the author’s part. I believe that this engagement aids readers in their own connection to the text as well as their ability to take the experiences presented in that text and apply the resulting collection of knowledge to their everyday lives.

In the act of creative writing, I tried to conceptualize the environment as though I were Lewis Carroll or Joseph Boyden. By wearing the hats of these writers I was able to explore the connection between characters and their environments, in my own stories, in a way that I would not

have been able to have done had I not explored Carroll's or Boyden's texts. Moreover, I began to think like a writer of fiction, as well as an ecocritic, and to utilize my theoretical training as a platform for my creative writing. I incorporated the connection between environment, literature and national identity that I explored in my ecocritical paper on Three Day Road into Rudy's development of his identity, emphasizing my own belief that if environmental relationships are lacking the formation of an understanding of the "self" will also be incomplete. In *Amanda in Weddingland* I utilized Carroll's style of parody and satire to play with the research I had collected on the separation between the country and the city. In this story, the city is a "wild" space and Amanda must learn to adapt to her confusing environment using whatever tools she can. It also highlights the absurdity of the common usage of the word "natural" (especially in the Jacob's assertion that "all natural" ingredients will make you grow) and points out that the construction of gender roles in heterosexual wedding planning is inappropriate and unequal, if not hilarious. These observations were grounded in the research I had been conducting on gender and the environment and pastoralism for my ecocritical reading of Alice, as well as in my own experiences. So then, it was through my engagement with my own ecocritical research that my short stories acquired a depth and complication that I had been unable to achieve in my past writing. In short, each type of writing informed the other, adding to their mutual complexity and overall quality. I would not have been able to explore the relationships between the environment and Boyden's characters as fully had I not been imagining such a relationship in all its complexity in writing *Rudy*, nor would I have conceptualized the importance of relating to the environment for the formation of personal identity had I not researched and outlined such an importance in my ecocritical writing about Three Day Road *War and Wilderness*. I would not have had the courage to criticize, so extensively, a personal experience in *Amanda in Weddingland* had I not been reading Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

and researching the life of Lewis Carroll at the same time, nor would I have been likely to expose Carroll's criticisms of his own environment had I not been scrutinizing my own.

On the whole, I have found that I have a much more personal connection with my creative writing than with my academic scholarship. That is not to say that theoretical scholarship has been any less formative for me: indeed it has informed all of my scholarship, creative or otherwise. But it is the creative approach to criticism that seemed to follow me around; I carried it around with me on the bus, on my way to work, and in my conversations with other people about my work. My engagement with theoretical writing, on the other hand, kept me awake at night, worrying that I had not researched enough, connected enough, or formed a complex enough argument. In my dreams, I would find myself stuck in a restaurant as the only server, waiting tables upon tables of ecocritics all ordering their meals using only ecocritical jargon and criticizing my writing in between bad jokes about the food ("I'll have the halibut, just for the *hall-i-bit*. Eh? Get it?") "Wait-mares"<sup>17</sup> took on a whole new dimension, becoming "eco-wait-mares", causing me to wake-up in a cold sweat in the early morning and re-research an exhausted topic. However, my writing is all the better for the lost sleep and moments of anxiety over my ability for depth of ecocritical engagement. It was these feelings of inadequacy (and some very helpful criticism from my supervisor) that challenged me to bring my academic writing up to a new level: I believe this is reflected in the previous chapters and the connections between them.

As I wrote *Rudy* I searched for an appropriate way to paint Rudy's lack of relationship with his environment. Drawing from Boyden's writing, in which his characters are so very connected to place, Rudy's inability to connect to his environment resulted in his lack of personal development. Similarly, in exploring Three Day Road from an ecocritical perspective, I linked the search for Canadian national identity to literature, and literature to place. Rudy then, mirrored the state of identity when it does not make that connection fully. In this way, analyzing Three Day Road helped

me to understand the connection of place to identity, and to create a complex narrative about a (Canadian) character who fails to make such a link.

In *Amanda in Weddingland* I struggled to illustrate the comedy of living and planning a wedding in downtown Toronto. In thinking about the ways in which Lewis Carroll portrayed the environment of Wonderland, I incorporated magic and nonsense into a “true” story, mimicking not only his writing style, but also his ability to engage the reader. Specifically, as the story takes place in an urban environment I used Amanda’s experiences to parody my own, utilizing her frustrations as an opportunity to raise issues about the urban environment (housing, food, transportation etc.) in the same way that Carroll utilized Alice to raise issues about industrial England. I played with the fine line between fiction and reality, describing real places with imagined characters, and vice versa. Writing in this way helped me to think about Alice’s experiences in Wonderland, to explore more completely this relationship, and to think about the ways in which this relationship informs the ability of Carroll’s readers to conceptualize their own environmental relationships.

As I stated in my introduction, for me, theory and academic writing without the incorporation of creative modes of representation, just seems flat. No matter how hard I try or how interesting the subject matter, I am easily bored or frustrated with academic reading and writing. Within the ecocritical community I am not alone in my sentiment. In particular, Scott Slovic states that as ecocritics we “must not reduce our scholarship to an arid, hyper-intellectual game, devoid of smells and tastes, devoid of actual experience. Encounter the world and literature together, then report about the conjunctions, the intersecting patterns.” It is this enthusiasm to embrace experience in narrative scholarship that is so attractive for me, and it is through an open ended engagement with this scholarship that I proceed happily as an ecocritic, though always grounded in literature and theory. Thus, writing creatively became a method through which I could enter into and enjoy writing like an academic. It helped me to think with more focus about environmental

relationships, as they relate to the individual, society, and literature itself. And it helped me to become more comfortable with the research material I had collected, turning it over in my head, looking for ways in which I could incorporate it into my short stories. Further, I do believe that literature and creative writing are important to the formation of individual ethics as per Martha Nussbaum. As such, writing, both creative and academic, is a valuable method in and of itself. For the reader, academic writing offers an opportunity for the cultivation of knowledge while creative fiction promotes the cultivation of ethical behaviour. For this writer the experience of writing academically and creatively has intensified the experiences of being a reader, and the act of reading and writing with the environment in mind has ensured that the environment remains a part of my daily consciousness and imagination.

My hope for this project is that it has helped to illustrate the importance of creative modes of representation for a more comprehensive ecocritical methodology. I have tried to demonstrate the need for narrative criticism in particular to expand its understanding of what constitutes personal narrative, reevaluating the need for facts and “truth” and turning to perhaps a more reflective (and fun) type of criticism. This type of criticism relies not on a worldview built upon the foundation of ecological research, but rather on self expression, critical thinking and a sense of humor. Further, I hope that this project work to illustrate that creative writing can act as a mode of critical inquiry, broadening our understanding of the relationship between critical writing and the texts such writing explores. I believe that ecocritical methodology is at its most potent and accessible when it utilizes both theoretical research and creativity, and that it is an ideal space for such an interaction to be not only successful but also necessary.

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## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Phillips points to the problematic use of the term “natural” within the ecocritical community, citing its use in Elder and Finch’s introduction to the Norton Book of Nature Writing. Phillips states: “Elder and Finch also overlook the fact that “the natural context of fiction” is and can only be a cultural context. However, they are using the word “natural” in an intuitive rather than in a theoretical way” (235).

<sup>2</sup> The window garden has died from the time I first began writing this introduction to the second round of editing. All that remains are the Rosemary and a hardy Aloe Vera plant. I have since invested in a small ficus tree and a fern of some sort, and am relinquishing all horticultural duties to my husband.

<sup>3</sup> In a moment of rebellion against the suggestion that the gar, in all its rotting stink, would likely make it into our poetry I wrote a poem about a cardinal that was perched in a tree near the shallow river our group was gathered near. It went as follows: “A cardinal, a fire of red in the trees/is still watching. It takes/no notice of the stream, the rumble of the cars, the shift of the wind./It doesn’t flinch/as I do/at the sound of a clunking plane overhead/or watch the black butterflies skittering/gently along the bank./ It does not/I suspect,/give a shit that I’m here. It asks nothing of me./Its stillness/makes me ask of myself/All poetry is action...” The retelling of the poem over drinks was even more fun than imagining it.

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to the first chapter of Alice’s Adventures, written by Will Brooker for a comprehensive list and discussion of the biographical material on Lewis Carroll

<sup>5</sup> While there is much to say about the text and the accompanying illustrations, I will be treating the text alone in this study. There are several reasons for this choice; most significantly that there have been several illustrators of Carroll’s tale and such a discussion would be beyond the scope of this paper. Further, while the illustrations of Alice’s time in Wonderland have changed, Carroll’s text has remained for the most part consistent. Also, as the focus of this major research paper is text, there are other authors who treat the illustrations much better than I ever could. For a comprehensive overview see chapter 4 of Alice’s Adventures by Will Brooker.

<sup>6</sup> These sections then, are designed to provide significant depth of argument while at the same time maintaining a manageable length of this chapter within the scope of the larger project. Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland is a text of such richness that providing an ecocritical analysis of each situation and character contained in its pages would require a project of book length: a liberty that I do not have in this venture.

<sup>7</sup> Carroll’s relationship with young girls is the topic of many studies and biographies, and indeed it has been frequently suggested that Carroll was in love with Alice Liddell. This now widely circulated postulation was introduced most convincingly by Alexander Taylor in 1952. Taylor’s theory, which cannot be proved and is presented in a different light by each of Carroll’s biographers, caught on immediately and is now a significant part of how we view Carroll’s work (Booker 1- 6). Further, images of Alice and Wonderland have been utilized by paedophiles and paedophilia rings connecting Carroll’s name and writings to child pornography and paedophilia.

<sup>8</sup> The experience of reading a text aloud is very different from silent reading. In being read to, the audience surrenders the power to determine tone and pace to the reader. It also necessitates a more linear relationship with the text, an experience that is more fixed in time and space than flipping pages individual to find a forgotten name, or to revisit an interesting event. Reading aloud also encourages engagement with the reader as an individual as well as with the text, facilitating group conversation and critical reflection (Manguel 109). In light of the circumstances surrounding Carroll’s conception of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland it is interesting to wonder if he intended his story to be read out loud.

<sup>9</sup> In the introduction to his book American Literary Environmentalism David Mazel offers an excellent discussion of the construction of “nature” in environmental discourse, comparing the issues inherent in such a construction with Judith Butler’s deconstruction of sex in her feminist critique (Mazel American xvii-xviii). He states that “[n]ature, much like sex, is not real at all but *performative*, and hence as malleable as any other constructed category” (Mazel Literary xviii).

<sup>10</sup> An interesting case could be made here for the necessity of environmental education in Alice’s lessons. Had typical ecocritical narrative criticism been a part of Alice’s schooling, she might be better equipped to deal with her new and strange environment. At the very least, she would have possessed some knowledge of desert plants (via Nabhan) or how to make maple syrup (via Elder). I’ll bet Nabhan and Elder don’t know how to play crowfoot with a flamingo. Rather, I believe that Alice’s struggle in a place so very unlike her own home helps readers to explore ways of coping with change that are not literal or place specific. This is one of the significant ways in which my version of narrative criticism, presented throughout this Major Research Paper, is unique from the very fashionable narrative criticism that is being practiced in the ecocritical community presently.

<sup>11</sup> The common assumption that children have an intimate and “natural” relationship with nature stems from Locke and Rousseau. Lesnik-Oberstein states: “Rousseau, as in many subsequent influential writers on childhood, such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and the educationalists Froebel, Pestalozzi, Montessori and Steiner, the book (and reading and



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writing) itself is in opposition (at least initially) to the natural and the child; the child's learning should be natural, from the natural (experience)" (212). Children's literature then, must navigate this inherent (perceived) contradiction and thus its themes are often centered on nature and animals. Reading these texts ecocritically gives us insight into the constructions of childhood and of nature simultaneously.

<sup>12</sup> I had originally set up this discussion as one between the constructs of "urban" and "nature" rather than a difference in value systems. However, I want to avoid the inclusion of a dichotomy here, as I believe that Boyden is comparing, pointing out both similarities and differences, between the landscapes he is presenting and his characters' successfulness in interacting with those environments. The connection between modern, urban, and eurowestern capitalist, in contrast to the connection between traditional, nature, and indigenous is so heavily loaded with historical and political rhetoric that I proceed with mild hesitancy throughout the following discussions.

<sup>13</sup> Boyden plays with the power of autobiography and authority, recognizing the strength of the narrative voice in his article "Killing a Rock," in the 2006 collection Writing Life: Celebrated Canadian and International Authors on Writing and Life. "Stealing" a story from his brother, he demonstrates the influence that a "good" story has on a reader's ability to comprehend an author's message or intent, and challenges our understanding of "truth."

<sup>14</sup> W.H. New explains that the language of early European settlers was not equipped to deal with describing a landscape that did not fit the European ideals of utopia. Thus, a Canadian utopian ideal of "wilderness as home" had to be reinvented, as did the language to justify and describe such an ideal (New 71).

<sup>15</sup> Louise Chawala outlines the rise of modern scientific understanding in her chapter on *Childhood and Nature* in In the First Country of Places: Nature, Poetry, and Childhood Understanding. She states that "[a]ccording to Descartes, the one indubitable principle of pure knowledge is our own pure consciousness, whose whole essence it is to think. He further proposed that it is the nature of our consciousness to think according to the analytic, deductive rules of logical syllogisms. We can attain certain knowledge in this way because the world beyond our minds – all the beasts, plants, and objects in it, including our own bodies – form one great mechanism, established according to parallel logical, deterministic laws of the great Lawmaker. Therefore, to the degree that we formulate our knowledge of the world in the language of logical propositions and mathematical equations, we approach truth and certainty. This pure consciousness, Descartes added, is associated with our soul. In contrast, the entire world of sense perceptions is a soulless material mechanism. To the extent that we identify ourselves with it, we err" (23).

<sup>16</sup> As Buell states "[m]any environmental critics, both first-wave and revisionist, seek to break down the formal division of labor between creative writing, criticism, field-based environmental studies, and environmental activism" (Future 30). Phillips cites Buell as the "de facto spokesman" for the ecocritical movement (Phillips 5).

<sup>17</sup> "Wait-mares" a term used throughout the service industry to describe nightmares in which one finds oneself back at work and one of the following: naked, serving a section of 52 seniors who all want their hot water and lemon at exactly the same time, the only person in the restaurant (where has all the kitchen staff gone and where have they left the recipes?), late, unable to work the coffee machine, serving a section so far on the other side of the restaurant that the streetcar is the only way to access it, late and naked.

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